

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixty-second  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 1992



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# THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND SEMIANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The 162nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 1992. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday afternoon sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning sessions.

Television and radio stations carried portions or all of the conference sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the general sessions and priesthood session were carried by satellite transmission to more than one thousand stake centers. The general priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately nine hundred locations in many countries. For the first time, the Sunday morning session was carried by satellite transmission to locations in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, and Jamaica.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the general sessions:

*The First Presidency:* <sup>1</sup>Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson

*The Council of the Twelve:* Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell,

Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* Dean L. Larsen, James M. Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, and L. Aldin Porter

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Robert L. Backman, Benjamin B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzio Busche, John K. Carmack, Joe J. Christensen, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Jacob de Jager, Robert K. Dellenbach, Loren C. Dunn, Henry B. Eyring, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasland, John H. Groberg, Marion D. Hanks, W. Eugene Hansen, Harold G. Hillam, Jeffrey R. Holland, F. Burton Howard, Marlin K. Jensen, L. Lionel Kendrick, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Adney Y. Komatsu, Alexander B. Morrison, Glenn L. Pace, H. Burke Peterson, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hartman Rector, Jr., Hans B. Ringger, Earl C. Tingey, and Robert E. Wells

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Albert Choules, Jr., Gary J. Coleman, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Clinton L. Cutler, Julio E. Dávila, John B. Dickson, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, Lloyd P. George, F. Melvin Hammond, Han In Sang, George R. Hill III, Jay E. Jensen, Malcolm S. Jeppsen, Kenneth Johnson, Cree-L Kofford,<sup>1</sup> W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, Richard P. Lindsay, Merlin R. Lybbert, John M. Madsen,<sup>1</sup> Helvécio Martins, Gerald E. Melchin, V. Dallas Merrell,

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<sup>1</sup>President Ezra Taft Benson and Elders John R. Lasater and Douglas J. Martin were excused.

Lynn A. Mickelsen, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Dennis B. Neuen-schwander, Jorge A. Rojas, Glen L. Rudd, Robert E. Sackley, Sam K. Shimabukuro, Douglas H. Smith, David E. Sorensen, Lynn A. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, Horacio A. Tenorio, J. Ballard Washburn, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

*The Presiding Bishopric:* Robert D. Hales, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music for the opening session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "O My Father." President Hinckley then made the following remarks:

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this, the first general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference in his apartment, has requested that we go ahead.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and the overflow

gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders James E. Faust, Robert E. Wells, and H. Burke Peterson are seated on the stand.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these conference proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

We acknowledge the General Authorities of the Church, all of whom are in attendance except President Benson and Elder Douglas J. Martin, who is serving as president of the New Zealand Temple. We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, who are seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We may make some mention of these flowers. They are a token of gratitude from the Saints of Kauai in thanks for the love and concern shown by members of the Church everywhere in their time of trial. They write, "Our flowers are all gone, and these were graciously provided by Brother Fred Rivera in behalf of the Saints of Maui." They conclude their little note with, "Aloha and mahalo." And we return the same to them: "Aloha and mahalo."

The Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sisters Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts at the organ, is providing the music for this session. They opened this session by singing "O My Father" and will now favor us with "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Seventy.

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The chorus sang "Joseph Smith's First Prayer."

Elder Harold G. Hillam offered the invocation.

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## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Sustaining President Benson

My brethren and sisters, President Benson ordinarily would speak to us in the opening session of the conference and extend his warm welcome. We regret that he is not with us. He would wish to be here, and we wish that he were here. It is becoming increasingly hard for him to get out. His age makes public appearances difficult. He is now in his ninety-fourth year. It is not easy for him to do what he once did with such vigor and enthusiasm. His strong and vibrant voice has stirred all of us in times past. His eloquence in expounding the gospel and his tremendous testimony of this work, persuasive in its tone and cogency, have lifted all who have heard him. We miss him and pray that the Lord will comfort him and bless him that he may enjoy much of happiness for the remainder of his life.

His burdens became much heavier when his beloved companion, Sister Flora Amussen Benson, passed away on August 14. They had been married for nearly sixty-six years. They have been an example to the entire Church. He now feels the terrible loneliness that comes to a man with the death of a gifted and beautiful wife, the mother of his children, his great support and comfort.

Our hearts reach out to him in sympathy and love. We pray that the Lord will comfort him and sustain him

and bring gladness into his heart while he yet remains with us as the prophet of God.

He has asked that we go forward with the conference. We do so with his encouragement and with a prayer in our hearts that we will be blessed of the Lord—all who speak—that there may be a great spiritual outpouring among the Saints who will meet in many places and under a great variety of circumstances.

As a reminder of the greatness of his power of expression, and as a reaffirmation to each of us, may I, as we open this conference, give you a statement or two of what he has told us in the past. It is worthy of repetition.

### The last and great dispensation

I quote: "This is the last and great dispensation in which the great consummation of God's purposes will be made, the only dispensation in which the Lord has promised that sin will not prevail. The Church will not be taken from the earth again. It is here to stay. The Lord has promised it and you are a part of that Church and kingdom—the nucleus around which will be builded the great kingdom of God on the earth. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God on the earth will be combined together at Christ's coming—and that time is not far distant. How I wish we could get the vision of this

work, the genius of it, and realize the nearness of that great event. I am sure it would have a sobering effect upon us if we realized what is before us" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 19).

### Follow the course

"God bless all of us that we may follow the course laid out for us by our Heavenly Father and our greatest example—the Lord Jesus Christ. May we do so regardless of what the world may say or do, that we may hold fast to the iron rod, that we may be true to the faith, that we may maintain the standards set for us and follow this course to safety and exaltation. (See 1 Ne. 8:19.) The door is open. The plan is here on earth. It is the Lord's plan. The

authority and power are here. It is now up to you" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 26).

Such have been the declarations of this man who stands today as the Lord's prophet and our President. We bring you his love, his greeting, and his blessing. And to him we return our love and our loyalty, with a prayer in our hearts that the God of heaven will bless him, comfort him, sustain him, and bring him joy and gladness. I so pray as I give you my testimony that he is the prophet whom the Lord has trained and sustained through all of these years to speak as a prophet unto the nations and as our leader, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Where is wisdom?

Today I would like to pose a question asked long ago by Job: "Where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12).

Leaders of this Church have repeatedly emphasized the importance of education. It is a vital component of wisdom. Not long after the pioneers began construction of their temple in Illinois, they established the University of the City of Nauvoo. The First Presidency proclaimed that this university "will enable us to teach our children wisdom, to instruct them in all the knowledge and learning, in the arts, sciences, and learned professions."<sup>1</sup>

A similar scene followed after the persecuted pioneers entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Less than three years later, on 28 February 1850, they instituted the University of the State of Deseret.<sup>2</sup> Later several academies of learning were established.

Now as Church membership worldwide exceeds eight million, it is evident that a direct role of the Church in secular education is no longer feasible. Yet our commitment to education remains constant.

Scriptures teach that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They also teach that individual "intelligences . . . were organized before the world was" (Abraham 3:22). "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

Our personal intelligence is everlasting and divine. I believe Thomas Jefferson felt that dignity of the human spirit when he wrote, "I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."<sup>3</sup>



## Seek education

Because of our sacred regard for each human intellect, we consider the obtaining of an education to be a religious responsibility. Yet opportunities and abilities differ. I believe that in the pursuit of education, individual desire is more influential than institution, and personal faith more forceful than faculty.

Our Creator expects His children everywhere to educate themselves. He issued a commandment: "Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). And He assures us that knowledge acquired here will be ours forever (see D&C 130:18-19).

Measured by this celestial standard, it is apparent that those who impulsively "drop out" and cut short their education not only disregard divine decree but frustrate the realization of their own potential.

I remember my moment of resolution many years ago when, as an untrained teenager, I secured temporary employment at Christmastime. The work was monotonous. Each hour and each day passed slowly. I resolved then and there that I must obtain an education that would qualify me better for life. I determined to stay in school and work for an education as though my very life depended upon it.

Later as stake president I was questioned by many young people about their own educational pursuits. Some asked me how long it took to become a doctor of medicine. "The general pattern would be four years at a university, followed by four years in medical school," I replied. "And if you choose to become a specialist, that could take another five years or more, depending upon your desire."

That occasionally evoked a reaction, "That adds up to thirteen years —

and maybe *more*? That's too long for me!"

"It all depends," I would respond. "Preparation for your career is not too long if you know what you want to do with your life. How old will you be thirteen years from now if you *don't* pursue your education? Just as old, whether or not you become what you want to be!"

So my counsel then — and now — is to continue your education wherever you are, whatever your interest and opportunity, however you determine you can best serve your family and society.

## Beware of unbalance

Choose what you will learn and whose purposes you will serve. But don't place all your intellectual eggs in one basket of secular learning. Remember this warning from the Book of Mormon:

"O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

"But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:28-29).

That scripture reminds me of a friend who proudly boasted that his climb toward wealth had come from tireless work and lessons learned in the "school of hard knocks." But his fortune had come at the expense of his spiritual development. When it was too late, he regretfully discovered that his ladder of success had been leaning against the wrong wall. He had never read this instruction from his Maker:

"Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich" (D&C 6:7; see also 11:7).

Mankind's unfamiliarity with the scriptures has sometimes brought sorrow to great numbers of people over long periods of time. The suffering that has resulted from such ignorance is truly tragic. May I illustrate with excerpts from history that pertain to the spread of infection.

In the nineteenth century, health officials and others were concerned about pollution of the air, not by visible smoggy hydrocarbons of today, but by an invisible miasma that was blamed for almost any infection. In 1867, for example, Lord Lister indicted bad air as the chief cause of infection.<sup>4</sup> Because of that, in 1869 Simpson from Edinburgh urged that hospitals be taken down and rebuilt every few years.<sup>5</sup> Such an extravagant practice was also advocated by other experts.<sup>6</sup>

Even Florence Nightingale, a living legend following her heroic efforts in the Crimean War, failed to recognize the transmission of infection from one patient to another—this despite her careful notations that wound infection accounted for 40 percent of post-operative mortality.<sup>7</sup>

But others missed the connection too. For centuries, lives of innumerable mothers and children were claimed by "childbirth fever"—infections unknowingly transmitted among the innocent by unwashed hands of attendants.<sup>8</sup>

It was only a short century ago that the great work of Koch, Pasteur, and others proved that infection could be caused by bacteria in contaminated body fluids—or infected issues—passed from one individual to another.

With these highlights of history in mind, may I quote the word of the Lord recorded long ago in Leviticus, chapter 15:

"The Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean.

"And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue. . . .

"Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean.

"And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water. . . .

"And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water" (Leviticus 15:1–5, 7; italics added).

Several verses follow which re-emphasize and illustrate those important principles. Then we read this conclusion:

"And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall . . . wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean" (15:13).

Thus our loving Heavenly Father had clearly revealed principles of clean technique in the handling of infected patients more than three thousand years ago! These scriptures are in complete harmony with modern medical guidelines.<sup>9</sup> But during those many millennia, how many mothers needlessly perished? How many children suffered because man's quest for knowledge had failed to incorporate the word of the Lord?

### Contemporary challenges

In our day many challenges face us. Some are new; some are old—simply clothed in modern attire. The epistles of Paul include prophecies pertaining to our day. Do these descriptions sound familiar?

"In the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, [and the list of insidious qualities goes on] . . .

"Without natural affection, . . .

" . . . Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: . . .

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 7).

Paul's warnings describe apostasy and other dangers of our day. Some of these perils are contrary to God's purposes and are championed by persuasive people possessing more ability than morality, more knowledge than wisdom. Their rationalization breeds justification. The Bible affirms that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Proverbs 12:15). Indeed, individuals with malignity of purpose often wear the mask of honesty. So we must constantly be on guard.

To build a house straight and strong, you do not choose crooked boards. So to build your eternal destiny, you cannot—you must not—limit lessons only to those warped to exclude revelation from God. The Book of Mormon offers this note of caution and hope:

"Seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works" (Jacob 4:10).

Remember the terrible price paid for ignorance of divine instruction. Until the turn of this century, infection was spread as if no one had ever read or taken seriously the fifteenth chapter of Leviticus. Where is wisdom?

Today we are seriously concerned with the increasing incidence of human infection with HIV (human immunosuppressive virus) and variant viruses and the associated outbreak of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). An epidemic has been forecast—a plague fueled by a vocal few who exhibit greater concern for civil rights than for public health, a plague abetted by the immoral. Some live in lust as though God's commandment to be chaste was written with an asterisk, exempting them from obeying. And re-

grettably, as in previous plagues, many innocent victims are doomed to suffer. Where is wisdom?

Avoidable deaths and mounting financial burdens are also incurred worldwide because of indifference to or ignorance of God's declaration that tobacco "is not good for man" (D&C 89:8). Many other societal problems could be listed, such as alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, civil strife, and erosion of family stability.<sup>10</sup> We may know so much, yet learn so little. "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"<sup>11</sup> Again I ask, Where is wisdom?

### Wisdom found

Wisdom is to be found in pure intelligence, in that divine light which can guide people in all countries, all climes, and all continents. The Lord promised that "a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel" (D&C 45:28). Then He lamented:

"But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. . . .

"And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

"But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die.

"And there shall be earthquakes also in divers places, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me" (D&C 45:29, 31-33; see also 87:6).

In bright contrast to such bitter chaos, the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ beams as the hope of the world. Missionaries and members courageously proclaim its brilliance. Wise

students throughout the world heed its light and enrich their education by adding the curriculum of Church seminaries and institutes. The Lord hides His wisdom from no one: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5).

Again I pose the question once asked by Job: "Where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12). Answer: It emanates from the Lord. He Himself said:

"I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Nephi 28:30).

Divine light and wisdom continue to increase when love for Deity grows:

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day" (D&C 50:24; see also 88:67).

"He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:28).

Where is wisdom? It pulses and surges with the Lord's light of truth! With that light He lifts us toward eternal life, I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 4:269.
2. *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 28 Feb. 1850, pp. 1-2.
3. In Elbert D. Thomas, *Thomas Jefferson, World Citizen* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1942), p. 251.
4. J. Lister, "On a New Method of Treating Compound Fracture, Abscess, etc., with Observations on the Conditions of Suppuration," *Lancet*, 1 (1867): 326.
5. J. Y. Simpson, "Our Existing System of Hospitalism and Its Effects," *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 14 (1869): 817.
6. L. A. Stimson, "Bacteria and Their Influence upon the Origin and Development of Septic Complications of Wounds," *New York Medical Journal*, 22 (1875): 144.
7. See Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), 1:352-438.
8. See Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, *Die Aetiologie, der Begriff und die Prophylaxis des Kindbettfiebers*, reprinted from 1861 ed. (New York: Johnson Reprint Co., 1966), pp. 102-13.
9. See *Isolation Techniques for Use in Hospitals* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1970), p. 9.
10. See Bryce J. Christensen, "Critically Ill: The Family and Health Care," in *The Family in America* (Mount Morris, Ill.: The Rockford Institute Center on the Family in America, May 1992), pp. 1-8.
11. T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,'" *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1971), p. 96.

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The chorus sang "Come, Follow Me."

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## President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Come, Follow Me."

Elder James M. Paramore of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak, and he will be followed by Bishop Glenn L. Pace of the Presiding Bishopric.

## Elder James M. Paramore

### Personal prisons

My beloved brothers and sisters, for several years and with the deepest feelings I have thought about what I would like to talk to you about this morning. The prophet Mormon tells us that “by the power of [the Lord’s] word did they cause prisons to tumble” (Mormon 8:24). In recent weeks I have reread the stories of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo’s brilliant novel *Les Misérables* and of Bob Merrick in the novel *Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd C. Douglas. These two stories, though widely different in time, circumstances, and affluence, have touched my heart in many ways.

I have agonized as I have thought about the ordeal of Jean Valjean—the nineteen years in prison and the things done to him for the small transgression of stealing a loaf of bread to feed a starving family. He suffered so many indignities even after he was finally released from the physical prison.

Some of the same feelings flood my mind as I reflect upon the self-inflicted sufferings of Bob Merrick. The life of a prominent surgeon was lost and the sight of another because of Bob Merrick’s wayward activities, selfishness, ego, and disdain for others. He suffered in a prison of his own making.

Yes, I realize these masterfully crafted episodes are fictional, but they cause me to think about the various types of prisons Satan leads us into building for ourselves and others, or that others build for us.

### The Savior will deliver us

Haven’t we all been delivered from various forms of captivity? How did you feel when the doors were opened to your personal prison? How was it to feel free? How wonderful it is to be liberated from any kind of a prison.

I remember how I felt forty-one years ago when I was taken from a train in Europe at 2:00 A.M. by two soldiers of a hostile nation and held against my will. I was verbally and physically abused. I felt I would never see my family or my country again. I assure you that while I was held captive, the blood coursed through my veins like adrenaline. Though the captivity lasted less than a day, it seemed like an eternity. And when I was put on another train and sent back to safety, my gratitude to the Lord knew no bounds. I was *free*! As I talked to the train conductor, I learned that hundreds had not been so lucky.

I then was led to think of Him who really delivers us from various types of prisons into forgiveness, a newness of life, of spirit, of change, and of opportunity, and how the souls of men find such relief, fulfillment, and safety when this occurs. I thought of the Son of God and His greatest freewill offering to each of us, given at the expense of His own life and under excruciating pain. I thought of how our Father in Heaven loves each one of us. And though we sometimes walk into prisons of our own making, He is there with keys to unlock the doors that bind us. I thought of those who help along the way, who share in turning those keys which deliver others, and who care so deeply sometimes that they rebuild the trust of others—like the two men of God in the novels helped to free Jean Valjean and Bob Merrick from their prisons into magnificent new freedoms promised by the Lord.

### Prisons that come from sin

As difficult as a physical captivity or prison is, there are other captivities or prisons even more devastating. They are very subtle and take various forms in life, such as (1) taking advantage of another; (2) bearing false witness to

get gain; (3) knowing things to be true and not defending them; (4) stealing the morality of another; (5) destroying the innocence of a little child; (6) being captive to alcohol or drugs; or (7) financially digging a pit for another, causing hardship and destroying his ability to take care of his needs and so on. There are many prisons which come from our sins or the sins of others "according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Nephi 2:27), who leads us away.

### **Deceit in business**

Let me take an example to illustrate the point of these prisons. The prophet Job counseled us not to "dig a pit for your friend" (Job 6:27). I understand that could mean a business associate, a neighbor, a member of the Church. How could this happen?

Several years ago a great young man had a thriving business. He had worked long, hard hours for many years to develop the skills, reputation, and expertise necessary to build his business and provide for the needs of his young family. He loved his work, and every morning he anxiously began each new project with creativity and opportunity. His was a great life, filled with much hope and many projects. Then one major project was completed and finalized. Rather large payments were anticipated, but a shrewd businessman found that oral approvals, given to my friend to make many necessary alterations in the project, could easily be broken and not honored. After all, there was no written record of the changes requested. It was just "good business" to get it as cheap as possible even after commitments were made. And so verbal commitments were not honored. The money due, which was considerable, was not paid.

At this point we have several prisons that are in place: the prison of deceit of the "shrewd" businessman, and the prison of the deceived, who could not now honor his own commitments.

To this day the one deceived, through further industry and much hardship, is still trying to get out of the prison created by another. And he has lost confidence in others, and he and his family have lost opportunities and his business because of another.

Did not the Savior teach through the prophet Moses, "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution"? (Exodus 22:5).

These types of prisons often cause the offended to lose faith, hope, and even the ability to care for their own, as was the case with my young friend. But these prisons should not happen. They often cause years of anguish. They cause those involved to wonder about justice and mercy. Sometimes these people find it impossible to resolve their own personal affairs honorably.

### **Do unto others**

The lessons taught by the Savior differ widely from these actions. For He taught, in effect, Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you (see Matthew 7:12; 3 Nephi 14:12). He taught, "Behold it is my will that you shall pay all your debts" (D&C 104:78). Yes, even if it takes years, pay your debts.

No Christian should ever be a challenge to another Christian. Many widows, single mothers, and older couples are victimized by those who take advantage of them, who do not honor their commitments and then put them into a type of prison. Those affected find themselves pleading for someone to open their prison doors, often while babies cry for bare necessities.

When we seek to follow Christ, we take the oath of a Christian as a member of this Church; we covenant to

never put another in any sort of prison, but rather to try to liberate those who are there. We become like one man who said that when he joined this Church it changed the way he thought, the way he talked, the way he believed, the way he dressed, the way he worked and honored his employer, the things he read, the movies he saw, the way he conducted his financial affairs in absolute honesty with everyone, and the way he served others. He truly believed in the liberating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and became free because of it. As is stated in the book of John, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

### **Freed from the prison of alcohol**

Years ago an acquaintance of mine was captive for over twenty years to a serious alcohol problem, which bound him every day. He would leave work, buy his alcohol, drive into the countryside, and drink until he could barely find his way home. He truly was under the captive spirit of the devil and lived in hell. A faithful home teacher loved this brother, saw him often, taught him to pray for help, and prayed for him often.

One day while he was driving his pickup truck into the countryside to begin his daily alcohol ritual, he felt a powerful influence to stop his truck, walk out into a field, fall to his knees, and plead for help from his Father in Heaven. Later he tearfully testified that as he arose from his knees, the desire to drink alcohol had completely left him. He had been delivered from a twenty-year prison. God heard his prayer, felt the desire of his heart, and opened the prison doors that bound him.

### **Jesus unlocks the doors**

Beloved friends, it is Jesus who has unlocked and will unlock the doors

of our personal prisons. It is a glorious promise to all who are captive, for whatever reasons, upon the condition of repentance.

Certainly a Latter-day Saint will demonstrate the freedom he has received by walking in all morality and all honesty, as taught by the Lord. For his word is his bond—sacred and honored. His life becomes the testament that it is all true—every principle and every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Savior and His prophets. By living these cardinal principles, we are truly free and we become the witnesses of His word.

One of the beautiful, profound statements of the man of God to Jean Valjean was: "My brother, you belong no more to evil, but to good. It is your soul I am buying for you, . . . and I give it to God" (Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, volume 1, book 2, chapter 12). No more prisons for others, if you will, because of my actions.

### **Repent to be free**

Jesus came that man might have life and have it more abundantly. He walked the path, taught the way, opened the doors to truly liberate mankind, and said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The writer, Mr. Douglas, expressed it beautifully when he said to Bob Merrick, "When you find THE WAY, you will be bound—it will become an obsession—a magnificent obsession."

We know it works, for listen to the words which record what happened to the Saints who truly followed the Savior for two hundred years following His appearance in America:

"And as many as did come unto them, and did *truly repent* of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost.

“... And there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man *did deal justly* one with another.

“And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they *were all made free*. . . .

“... And surely there could not be a *happier people* among all the people

who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:1–3, 16; italics added).

Yes, “by the power of his word did they cause prisons to tumble” (Mormon 8:24). May we live our lives so we will all be free with no prisons for ourselves or others, only a magnificent obsession filled with freedoms and blessings ahead, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Bishop Glenn L. Pace

### Strengthening personal testimonies

When I was young I was overly dependent on my older sister. For example, I was a fussy eater, and when we went to visit our grandparents I was constantly faced with being offered food I didn't like. To minimize my embarrassment, when the plate was passed to me, I would turn to my sister and ask, “Collene, do I like this?”

If it was familiar and she knew I didn't like it, she would say, “No, he doesn't like that.”

I could then say to Grandma, “She's right; I don't like it.”

If it was something we hadn't eaten before, she would say, “Just a minute,” and taste it, and then tell me if I liked it or not. If she said I didn't like it, no amount of coaxing could get me to eat it.

I know it is past time for me to rely on my own taste buds and stop denying myself healthy food just because my sister told me I didn't like it.

On a much more serious note, I believe the time has come for all of us to feast on the fruit of our own testimonies as opposed to the testimony of another person. The testimony of which I speak is much deeper than knowing the Church is true. We need to progress to the point of knowing we are true to the Church. We also need to increase our capacity to receive personal revelation. It is one thing to receive a witness that

Joseph Smith saw God and Christ. It is quite another to have spiritual self-confidence in your ability to receive the revelation to which you are entitled.

### The train of the Church

Many of us take the blessings of the gospel for granted. It is as if we are passengers on the train of the Church, which has been moving forward gradually and methodically. Sometimes we have looked out the window and thought, “That looks kind of fun out there. This train is so restrictive.” So we have jumped off and gone and played in the woods for a while. Sooner or later we find it isn't as much fun as Lucifer makes it appear, or we get critically injured, so we work our way back to the tracks and see the train ahead. With a determined sprint we catch up to it, breathlessly wipe the perspiration from our foreheads, and thank the Lord for repentance.

While on the train we can see the world and some of our own members outside laughing and having a great time. They taunt us and coax us to get off. Some throw logs and rocks on the tracks to try and derail it. Other members run alongside the tracks, and while they may never go play in the woods, they just can't seem to get on the train. Others try to run ahead and too often take the wrong turn.



I would propose that the luxury of getting on and off the train as we please is fading. The speed of the train is increasing. The woods are getting much too dangerous, and the fog and darkness are moving in.

### **Time for spiritual revival**

Although our detractors might as well “stretch forth [their] puny arm[s] to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream” (D&C 121:33) as try to derail this train, they are occasionally successful in coaxing individuals off. With all the prophecies we have seen fulfilled, what great event are we awaiting prior to saying, “Count me in”? What more do we need to see or experience before we get on the train and stay on it until we reach our destination? It is time for a spiritual revival. It is time to dig down deep within ourselves and rekindle our own light.

President Joseph F. Smith said, “One fault to be avoided by the Saints, young and old, is the tendency to live on borrowed light [and] to permit . . . the light within them to be reflected, rather than original” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 87).

### **Storms of disaster and disobedience**

The whole world seems to be in commotion. Today’s news is filled with accounts of large-scale famine, civil unrest, and natural disasters. Even more devastating in the long run is the spiritually destructive hurricane of disobedience to God’s commandments that is engulfing the world. This horrible storm is blowing the moral fiber out of the nations of the earth and leaving the land in moral desolation. Many people seem to be oblivious to this hurricane and have become so desensitized they don’t even feel a breeze.

We are following a cycle which was repeated over and over again in the Book of Mormon. As the Lord tells us, “In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (D&C 101:8).

We shouldn’t be too surprised, therefore, that the Lord is allowing some wake-up calls to jar us loose from apathy just as he has done in previous dispensations. In the book of Helaman, Nephi said, “And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3).

In our dispensation the Lord has said, “And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer” (D&C 105:6).

### **Prepare by learning obedience**

To some, the events unfolding in the world today are frightening. This is not a time to panic, but it is definitely a time to prepare. What can we do to better prepare ourselves for that which is at our doorstep? It is simple. We need to get back to basics and “learn obedience.” When we are obedient, we follow the first principles of the gospel and place our faith in our Lord and Savior; we repent of our sins; we are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost to guide us. We read and ponder the scriptures, pray for direction in our lives, and look for ways to help others who are going through difficult times. We share the gospel with people living on earth and make it possible for saving ordinances to be performed for those who have passed beyond the veil.

During this conference and on many other occasions we will be taught by the Lord’s anointed servants. These prophets, seers, and revelators receive revelation relative to the kingdom to which their mantle entitles them. We follow the Brethren. Finally, we pre-

pare ourselves to receive an endowment in the temple. If we remain faithful, this endowment literally gives us additional power to overcome the sins of the world and "stand in holy places" (D&C 45:32).

I make a special appeal to the youth. You will remain much safer and infinitely happier if you will place your energy into current obedience rather than saving it for future repentance. When we are obedient, we establish a base from which the challenges of the future can be addressed.

### **Golden moments of adversity**

In spite of our obedience, trials and tribulations will come our way. Disasters and tribulation are not always for the punishment of the wicked, but often for the sanctification of the righteous. We admire the early members of the Church for their faithfulness through their numerous trials. It is interesting to contemplate whether they succeeded in facing their obstacles because of their spirituality or whether they were spiritual because of the obstacles they faced.

Into each of our lives come golden moments of adversity. This painful friend breaks our hearts, drops us to our knees, and makes us realize we are nothing without our Lord and Savior. This friend makes us plead all the night long for reassurance and into the next day and sometimes for weeks and months. But ultimately, just as surely as the day follows the night, as we remain true and faithful, this strange friend, adversity, leads us straight into the outstretched arms of the Savior.

I have tried to understand why we must experience tribulation before we can experience the ultimate communication. It seems there is an intense concentration which must be obtained before our pleadings reach our Father in Heaven and, perhaps even more

importantly, before He can get through to us. Sometimes we must be straining very hard to hear the still small voice. Before we can be taught things hidden from the world, we must be on a spiritual frequency which is out of this world. Adversity can help fine-tune this frequency. Even the Savior communicated more intensely with our Father in Heaven when he was in agony. When the Lord was in Gethsemane, Luke recorded, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44).

### **Being valiant in our testimonies**

The challenge for each of us, in order to prevent having to receive constant wake-up calls, is to remain obedient once we have turned upward. As the storm clears, it is possible to stay in tune by being valiant in our testimonies. We can then enjoy reprieves—sometimes long ones—and have a taste of heaven on earth. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be in the plan to have a whole lifetime of bliss if our goal is increased spirituality and perfection.

It is my hope that each of us will experience a spiritual revival as we become more obedient. This increased depth of spirituality will help give us the perspective we need to face today's adversities and the strength we need for tomorrow. While the world is in commotion, the kingdom is intact. We are living in the greatest and most exciting part of our dispensation since the Restoration itself. We plead with everyone to become active participants in building the kingdom. This is the hour of our opportunity, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elder James M. Paramore and Bishop Glenn L. Pace have just spoken to us.

The chorus and congregation will now join in singing "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling," following which we shall hear from Elder Robert L. Backman, recently released as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

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The chorus and congregation sang "Israel, Israel, God Is Calling."

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## Elder Robert L. Backman

### **An emeritus General Authority**

Fourteen years ago I stood at this pulpit to accept my call to the Seventy. The years following have been the most challenging, rewarding, satisfying years of my life. I have enjoyed every choice experience I have had.

At this conference I am being made an emeritus General Authority. I pray that my productive life is not over. I look ahead and wonder what to do with the rest of my days. I don't feel old; my mind is still reasonably alert; my body still functions well. My father died at ninety-four. My mother still lives at ninety-five. I have a lot of mileage left in me. Barring an accident, I probably have at least another twenty-five years ahead of me.

I don't want to be like the retiree of whom it was said, "He died at seventy but waited to be buried until he was eighty-five."

What to do?

### **An example for retired people**

There is a single passage in all the New Testament which describes the Savior's life between the age of twelve and when he began his ministry. I have quoted that passage many times in speaking to the youth. I wonder if it doesn't have just as much application for the rest of us, particularly those who are retired. Luke wrote, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

In today's vernacular, these words translate into our Savior's growing physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. What a model to follow!

### **Growing physically**

Of course our bodies are wearing down. That is part of life. But I believe we have a duty to maintain our health the best we can through proper exercise, a healthy diet, daily care of our bodies. I hope to emulate Elder Joseph Anderson, who was still swimming at one hundred and walking daily until his death, or my uncle, Milt Backman, who is still playing racquetball at ninety-four.

### **Growing mentally**

We need to keep expanding our minds, for they require exercise as surely as do the muscles of our bodies. I want to follow the example of my good neighbor, Perris Jensen, who graduated from Brigham Young University at eighty-one, and Amelia McConkie, widow of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who, after her husband's death, took up painting.

I have already started piano lessons, and I mean to master the computer if I live long enough.

### **Growing socially**

We have so many opportunities to serve our fellowmen. Wherever we live, our fellow citizens are hungry for the wisdom and experience of those who

have lived long and well. Without the voluntarism which can be given by the retired, our cities are in danger of dying. As I look ahead, I think of the tremendous civic good deeds Lowell Bennion has extended throughout his life but more particularly since he retired. He has exemplified real Christian living, reaching out to "the least of these [our] brethren" (Matthew 25:40).

### Growing spiritually

One of the dangers I see in retiring is that we withdraw from the world. We turn inward as society seems to say, "We have no more use for you." With the aging of our society, more and more of us are going to retire. I hope the Church will continue to use us. We have been tried and tested throughout our lives. Society is not likely to experience any challenge we have not faced. We have learned what is important and what brings lasting happiness. Use our experience, our testimonies, our wisdom, and our understanding. We can still assist in building the kingdom of God. I believe he needs all the help he can get.

### Enduring to the end

There is no retirement from the service of the Lord. We believe in eternal progression. We should continually grow spiritually throughout our lives. The gospel challenges us to endure to the end.

The word *endure* has an interesting connotation. We seem to equate it with suffering. I was interested to discover that *endure* comes from the Latin word *indurare*, which means "to harden, to steel, make lasting." I like one of the definitions of the word *endure* found in the *Random House Dictionary*. It defines *endure* as "to have or gain continued or lasting acknowledgment or recognition, as of worth, merit, or greatness."

When I think of the supernal joy I have experienced during my ministry, I hope those rich spiritual adventures are not ended. I know they will not be if I accept the opportunities to serve that lie ahead.

### Retired couples as missionaries

Having been deeply involved in missionary work for the past several years, I see such glorious opportunities for older couples to continue to be useful in serving their fellowmen. How badly the Church needs us!

There are so many of you who have found fulfillment in serving missions, forgetting yourselves in that important work, staying youthful in the discipline and single-mindedness that come with being immersed in the gospel and sharing your testimonies with all those you meet. I hope I can do the same!

I think of Royce Flandro and his wife, who after retirement served a mission in Spain, performing valuable service. Upon returning home they missed that beautiful experience, so they came to the Missionary Department to ask where they could help the most. It was suggested to them that they might learn Hungarian, which they did. A few months later they were called to Hungary, once again serving with distinction. Now they are headed for Mongolia.

So many of us are afraid to leave our "comfort zones" and thus cheat ourselves of some of the greatest adventures of our lives.

Brother and Sister Harold Salway have served in Fiji, Ireland, South Africa, Israel, England, California, and are now preparing to go to Florida. They intend to continue to serve as long as their health permits. Who can measure the good they have done or the blessings they have received?

The staff in the Missionary Department recently received a letter from President Thomas R. Murray of

the Missouri Independence Mission concerning the missionary service of Elder and Sister Ronald Smith. He wrote:

"The Smiths left a legacy in Nebraska City, Nebraska. They baptized eighteen people, reactivated a large number in two wards, traveled many miles per month, contributed to the local newspaper, gave meaningful community service, motivated the Scouting program, strengthened the ward leadership, fellowshiped and friendshipped, and provided great public relations for the Church in the community."

Where could the Smiths have spent a more productive, profitable time or experienced more fulfilling service?

### **Couples can learn languages**

Some have an idea that as we get older we can't learn languages. That is not true. Again and again we see couples come to the Missionary Training Center without prior knowledge of a language and leave two months later able to communicate. Of course their skills increase as they love and serve in the mission field. Even when a new language is difficult, older couples perform a unique service in the missions simply by being there. Their experience, example, and faith serve as tremendous resources in building inexperienced members of the Church. They are absolutely indispensable to the growth of the kingdom across the world.

I remember meeting a wonderful couple who were missionaries among the southeast Asians of the California Oakland Mission. As I saw the bonding between the missionaries and these delightful new Latter-day Saints, I asked the sister missionary whether she could speak their language. She responded that she could not. I then asked her how they communicated with

the members. With tears in her eyes, she replied, "We just love them."

### **Looking forward to new opportunities**

I have rejoiced in the rich experiences of the past fourteen years, but I look forward to the challenges of the golden years ahead. I look forward to new experiences, new adventures, new horizons, new worlds to conquer. I look forward to new opportunities to grow physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. I pray that my life from this day forth will testify that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

I pray that you and I might wear ourselves out in the service of the Lord so that at the end of our useful, productive lives we can exult with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

### **Instruments in the Lord's hands**

I conclude my public ministry by paraphrasing the words I spoke in 1978, words that have even deeper meaning for me after that choice experience.

President Benson declared that the highest honor we could have is to be members of God's Church, which I am; to know that Christ is our Savior, which, I testify to you, I know; to hold his holy priesthood, which I do; and to be part of an eternal family unit, which I am. I'm honored above all men. I'm blessed above all men. And I am so grateful for the holy calling which I have enjoyed. I rejoice in the opportunity that has been mine of consecrating my entire life to His service.

Every blessing I have in my life, everything I hold dear and precious in my heart, I can trace to my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to my love of the Lord, to my testimony of his divine gospel, and to the responses I have made to the opportunities for service.

My beloved Brethren, my dear wife and I are still prepared to go wherever you want to send us and to do whatever you ask of us. We pray only that we might be instruments in the hands of the Lord to assist you in your awesome assignment to build the kingdom of God, to sanctify his people, and to prepare the way for Christ to come in his glory, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is the Savior of the world, which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. (See Conference Report, Apr. 1978, p. 109; or *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 72.)

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The chorus sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

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### President Hinckley

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Seventy has just addressed us, and the chorus has sung "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

Thank you, Elder Backman, for those stirring remarks. How I've enjoyed these last seven years, being closely associated with you.

Brigham Young once counseled us to use the scriptures as follows:

"Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 128).

### Moroni's voice of warning

The Book of Mormon has many special accounts with lessons which can be applied to all ages. It is a book of great passion and feeling. Let us take Brigham Young's advice and imagine we are standing in the place where Moroni, the last of the great Nephite prophets, stood. The assignment his

father gave to him to complete the record, which was entrusted to his care, was very difficult. He must have been in a state of shock as he described the total destruction of his people.

He must have felt compelled to describe how his people had been hunted by the Lamanites until they were all destroyed. In his feeling of loneliness, he reports that his father was among those who were killed. We sense that the only thing Moroni is living for is to complete the record, as he writes, "Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not" (Mormon 8:4).

All he has is the faith that the Lord will preserve him long enough to complete the record and that someday it will be found by one chosen of the Lord. He realizes that the record will be a voice of warning to future generations of what occurs when nations like his own turn away from the teachings of the Lord. It is from the depths of his heart that Moroni cries out to those who will eventually receive the record. He wants to spare those who read his account the heartache and misery which come from disobedience.

### Warning to Church members

He writes first to the members of the Church and then to those who have not embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moroni's last words to the members of the Church are written as a voice of warning. He writes as one who sees the history of his people repeating itself in the future. From the Book of Mormon we read:

"Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

"Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

"And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

"O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?" (Mormon 8:34–38).

I guess one of the greatest mysteries of mortality is why mankind fails to learn from history. Why do those who profess to be true followers of Christ so often become victims of the enticements of the world? The evidence is so

strong regarding the blessings which accrue to those who trust in and follow the ways the Lord has prescribed for us.

### Successes in Utah

Several recent articles in the news and business press have reported on the success of Utah, the place where we still have the greatest concentration of members of the Church. They emphasize that we are seen as "a repository of old-fashioned values, an American success story" (Peter Steinfelds, "Despite Growth, Mormons Find New Hurdles," *New York Times*, 15 Sept. 1991, sec. 1, p. 1).

One article reported: "If religion, as Karl Marx once wrote, is 'the opium of the people,' in Utah it is the amphetamine. Thanks largely to the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Utah has become the envy of its neighbors" (Sally B. Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," *Time*, 29 July 1991, p. 22).

From another magazine, *Business Week*, we read: "Utah at its best. Of the 50 states, Utah has the highest literacy rate, the youngest population, the highest percent of high school graduates, the highest percent of persons with college education, the ninth highest percent of college graduates, a state population with the highest average number of years of school completed, the highest birth rate, the lowest death rate, the fourth longest life expectancy, one of the three lowest cancer rates, one of the lowest heart disease rates, the lowest consumption of alcohol, the lowest consumption of tobacco, the shortest average hospital stays, the healthiest population, . . . [and] the best-run state government" (*Business Week*, 16 Dec. 1991, p. 118J).

Notice both what is being said and not being said in these articles. They are honoring collective accomplishments, not individual achievements. It is noteworthy of what the citizens of

Utah have been able to do together. As communities they have become a beacon to the world. As a people they have demonstrated an ability to overcome much of the divisiveness of special interests, uncontrolled individualism, and selfishness.

### **Many members seek worldly pursuits**

How I wish I could feel comfortable with all this special attention we are receiving. In the midst of this favorable publicity, we see so many members seeking worldly pursuits contrary to the words of the Lord's prophets through the ages.

Many of us are more concerned about our fine apparel, the size of our homes, and our cars and their gadgets than we are about the needs of the poor and the needy. We also have seen the threats of legalized abortion, gambling, and pornography, and challenges to public prayer undermining the values that bind us together as a community of Saints.

### **Stand firm in your convictions**

Clearly the members of the Church face tremendous challenges in the latter days. We must not only resist, but mount a counteroffensive against the temptations of the world and its teachings if we are to preserve our uniqueness.

Despite the challenges we face, I plead with each one of you to stand firm in your convictions. There is no way to escape the whirlwinds of the judgments of God that He will unleash on the heads of His children who choose to pursue a course that is against His will. We need to heed Moroni's warning to avoid the fate which destroyed his people.

### **Warning to unbelievers**

Part of what Moroni was feeling should also be translated into a re-

newed desire to do missionary service. Moroni also witnessed the wickedness and destruction which come from unbelief, when men's and women's souls are not anchored to the teachings of the gospel. After warning the believers, he pleads with the unbelievers. Again we read:

"And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ.

"Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

"Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? . . .

"O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day" (Mormon 9:1–3, 6).

Who would not want to heed the voice of warning of one who has witnessed such heartache and misery? Is it any wonder that his words are to declare that there is a better, happier, and more fulfilling way to live?

### **Moroni's voice of hope**

Moroni's words are not just a voice of warning but also a voice of hope as he lets us know that every one of God's children is precious to Him. He desires that every soul enjoy immortality and eternal life. Again we read:

"Because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they



are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

"And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still" (Mormon 9:13-14).

We are here to declare that the restored gospel of our Lord and Savior is here to bless all of our Father in Heaven's children. We are anxious to share it with you. One of our recent prophets has declared:

"Our objective is to bring the gospel to all the world.

Brethren, this is an ambitious project we have, but as you know, we are but planning to do what the Lord has already seen and which He has charged us with" (Spencer W. Kimball, Regional Representatives' seminar, 5 Apr. 1976, p. 1).

We invite you to come and join with us to find the real fulfillment life has to offer.

### **Obeys and serve to overcome gloom**

Today we find ourselves surrounded with so much depression, despair, lack of confidence, and loss of hope. I ask myself, For what purpose is all this gloom? Consider with me for a moment the great blessings which have been promised us in a covenant with the Lord. He has entered into a solemn and binding contract with each of us from the very beginning to give us all that He hath according to our faithfulness. He

has declared, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say" (D&C 82:10).

By solemn covenant He will perform His part of the agreement. The opportunity to receive these great blessings is ours to control based on our individual performance. What is required of us?

First, we need to be obedient to the laws of the Lord. This is one of the first lessons taught to Adam and Eve: obedience brings faith. It brings forth the blessings of heaven. Disobedience brings forth heartache and despair.

Following the law of obedience comes the requirement to give of ourselves in service to our Father in Heaven's children. Sacrificing what we have to benefit our brothers and sisters is the crowning test of the gospel. One of the purposes of the mortal experience is to see if we will follow the Savior's counsel to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

### **Finding the joys of eternity**

We live in the most glorious era in the history of mankind. The opportunity to reap the blessings of the Lord has never been greater, as is the opportunity to serve Him and experience the eternal satisfaction which comes from that service.

Let the words of Moroni and the voices of all the prophets fill our hearts and our souls that we may escape the errors of the past caused by disobedience to the eternal laws of God. Let us remember that it is in our power to enjoy the fruits of the gospel, for He has promised us that if we will be obedient to His law and be willing to render unto Him what He requires of us in service and sacrifice, we will find the joys of eternity.

It is my witness to you that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Eternal God, and I so declare it in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

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### **President Hinckley**

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council

of the Twelve has spoken to us, and the chorus has sung "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

## **President Howard W. Hunter**

### **The beacon in the harbor of peace**

My dear brothers and sisters, we are mindful that, in spite of hopeful progress seen in recent years, many parts of the world are still filled with strife and sorrow and despair.

Our hearts are torn and our emotions touched when each day's coverage of local or global news brings yet another story of conflict and suffering and, all too often, open warfare. Surely our prayer is to see the world made a better place in which to live, to see more care and concern for one another, and to see the cause of peace and reassurance increased in every direction and extended to all people.

In the pursuit of such peace and reassurance, may I quote a great voice from the past. He said: "[In order to make the world] a better place . . . to live, . . . the first and most important step is to choose as a leader one whose leadership is infallible, whose teachings when practiced have never failed. In . . . [any] tempestuous sea of uncertainty, the pilot must be one who through the storm can see the beacon in the harbor of peace" (David O. McKay, *Man May Know for Himself* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967], p. 407).

### **Jesus is the only unfailing beacon**

The message of this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that there is but

one guiding hand in the universe, only one truly infallible light, one unfailing beacon to the world. That light is Jesus Christ, the light and life of the world, the light which one Book of Mormon prophet described as "a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

As we search for the shore of safety and peace, whether we be individual women and men, families, communities, or nations, Christ is the only beacon on which we can ultimately rely. He is the one who said of his mission, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

In this age, as in every age before us and in every age that will follow, the greatest need in all the world is an active and sincere faith in the basic teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God. Because many reject those teachings, that is all the more reason why sincere believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ should proclaim its truth and show by example the power and peace of a righteous, gentle life.

### **Love your enemies**

Consider, for example, this instruction from Christ to his disciples. He said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Think what this admonition alone would do in your neighborhood and mine, in the communities in which you and your children live, in the nations which make up our great global family. I realize this doctrine poses a significant challenge, but surely it is a more agreeable challenge than the terrible tasks posed for us by the war and poverty and pain the world continues to face.

How are we supposed to act when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against? What are we supposed to do if we are hurt by those we love, or are passed over for promotion, or are falsely accused, or have our motives unfairly assailed?

Do we fight back? Do we send in an ever-larger battalion? Do we revert to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or, as Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, do we come to the realization that this finally leaves us blind and toothless?

### Be more forgiving

We all have significant opportunity to practice Christianity, and we should try it at every opportunity. For example, we can all be a little more forgiving. In latter-day revelation the Lord said:

"My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

"I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men" (D&C 64:8-10).

### Christ taught with authority and love

In the majesty of his life and the example of his teachings, Christ gave us much counsel with secure promises always attached. He taught with a grandeur and authority that filled with hope the educated and the ignorant, the wealthy and the poor, the well and the diseased.

His message, as one writer said, "flowed forth as sweetly and as lavishly to single listeners as to enraptured crowds; and some of its very richest revelations were vouchsafed, neither to rulers nor to multitudes, but to the persecuted outcast of the Jewish synagogue, to the timid inquirer in the lonely midnight, and the frail woman by the noonday well." His teachings dealt not so much with ceremony and minutia as "with the human soul, and human destiny, and human life—with Hope and Charity, and Faith. . . . Springing from the depths of holy emotions, it thrilled the being of every listener as with an electric flame. In a word, [his] authority was the authority of [God]." Christ's voice was pure and pervaded with sympathy. Even the severity of his sternest injunctions was expressed with an unutterable love. (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [Portland, Oreg.: Fountain Publications, 1964], p. 215.)

### "It is I; be not afraid"

Let me recall one of the great stories of Christ's triumph over that which seems to test us and try us and bring fear to our hearts. As Christ's disciples set out on one of their frequent journeys across the Sea of Galilee, the night was dark and the elements were strong and contrary. The waves were boisterous and the wind was bold, and these mortal, frail men were frightened. Unfortunately "there was no one with them . . . to calm and save [them], for Jesus was alone upon the [shore]."

As always, he was watching over them. He loved them and cared for them. In their moment of greatest extremity they looked and saw in the darkness an image in "a fluttering robe" walking toward them on "the ridges of the sea. . . . They cried out in terror at the sight, thinking that it was a phantom that walked upon the waves. And through the storm and darkness to them—as so often to us, when, amid the darknesses of life, the ocean seems so great, and our little boats so small," there came the ultimate and reassuring voice of peace with this simple declaration: "It is I; be not afraid." Peter exclaimed, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." And Christ's answer to him was the same as to all of us: "Come."

Peter "sprang over the vessel's side into the troubled waves, . . . and while his eye was fixed on his Lord, the wind might toss his hair, and the spray might drench his robes, but all was well." Only when with wavering faith he removed his glance from the Master to look at the furious waves and the black gulf beneath him, only then did he begin to sink. Again, like most of us, he cried, "Lord, save me." Nor did Jesus fail him. "He stretched out His hand, and grasped the hand of His drowning disciple, with the gentle rebuke, 'O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?'"

Then safely aboard their little craft, they saw the wind fall and the crash of the waves become a ripple. Soon they were at their haven, their safe port, where all would one day hope to be. "All—the crew as well as His disciples—were filled with [deep] amazement." Some of them addressed him by a title which I declare today: "Truly thou art the Son of God." (See Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 310–13; see also Matthew 14:22–33.)

## Fix our eyes on Jesus

It is my firm belief that if as individual people, as families, communities, and nations, we could, like Peter, fix our eyes on Jesus, we too might walk triumphantly over the swelling waves of disbelief and remain unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt. But if we turn away our eyes from him in whom we must believe, as it is so easy to do and the world is so much tempted to do, if we look to the power and fury of those terrible and destructive elements around us rather than to him who can help and save us, then we shall inevitably sink in a sea of conflict and sorrow and despair.

At such times when we feel the floods are threatening to drown us and the deep is going to swallow up the tossed vessel of our faith, I pray we may always hear amid the storm and the darkness that sweet utterance of the Savior of the world: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

Thank you, President Howard W. Hunter, for your inspiring remarks.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

This wonderful chorus of young voices will now sing "The Spirit of God." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Presidency of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The chorus sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1992, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions. Roger L. Sorenson conducted the choir, and John Longhurst was at the organ.

At the beginning of the meeting, President Monson made the following remarks:

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the second general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We excuse President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the proceedings of the conference on television.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We express our gratitude to the owners and operators of many radio and television stations and cable systems for their cooperation in making

these proceedings available to members and friends of the Church in many countries.

We note that Elders Russell M. Nelson, Hugh W. Pinnock, and Ronald E. Poelman are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall.

The music for this session will be provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions, under the direction of Brother Roger L. Sorenson, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir will begin this session by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The invocation will be offered by Elder LeGrand R. Curtis of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder LeGrand R. Curtis offered the invocation.

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### **President Monson**

The choir will now sing "Teach Me to Walk in the Light." President Gordon B. Hinckley will then present the General Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "Teach Me to Walk in the Light."

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## Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My brothers and sisters, in harmony with the principle of common consent as set forth in the revelation, I shall now present to you the General

Authorities and general officers of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints;

Gordon B. Hinckley as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and Thomas S. Monson as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Any who feel otherwise may so manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Howard W. Hunter as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and the following as members of that council: Howard W. Hunter, Boyd K. Packer, Marvin J. Ashton, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, James E. Faust, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, and Richard G. Scott. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any who may feel otherwise.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor. Any who feel to the contrary may indicate by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of release and appreciation to Elders Marion D. Hanks and Robert L. Backman for their service as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and that they be designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release the following who have served as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy: George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, and Lynn A. Sorensen.

It is proposed that Bishop Henry B. Eyring and Bishop Glenn L. Pace be released as First and Second Counselors, respectively, in the Presiding Bishopric.

Those who wish to vote in a note of appreciation for the great service of these Brethren may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Dean L. Larsen, James M.

Paramore, J. Richard Clarke, Rex D. Pinegar, Carlos E. Asay, Charles Didier, and L. Aldin Porter. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

Since April conference, Elders Carlos H. Amado, Benjamin B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, and Robert K. Dellenbach have been called as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. It is proposed that we sustain Henry B. Eyring and Glenn L. Pace as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who can join in sustaining these Brethren may so indicate. If there be any to the contrary, please indicate by the same sign.

Elders Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, and Lowell D. Wood have been called as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy since the April conference. Those who wish to sustain this action and these Brethren may so indicate it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain H. David Burton as First Counselor and Richard C. Edgley as Second Counselor to Bishop Robert D. Hales in the Presiding Bishopric. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we give a vote of appreciation to Elders Hugh W. Pinnock, Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler for their service as the Sunday School General Presidency and to Elders Robert K. Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld for their service as first and second counselors, respectively, in the Young Men General Presidency. All who wish to join in this may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman as the Sunday School General Presidency and that we sustain Elders Stephen D. Nadauld and L. Lionel Kendrick as

first and second counselors, respectively, in the Young Men General Presidency. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general officers of the Church as presently constituted. All in favor. Any who may be opposed.

It appears that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative.

We invite the new Counselors in the Presiding Bishopric to take their places on the stand at this time.

Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your vote of love and support.

Now, for the information of the members of the Church, we are pleased to announce that work is proceeding on schedule for the San Diego California Temple, which will likely be dedicated next spring. Work is also on schedule for the Orlando Florida and Bountiful Utah temples. Architectural work is proceeding, looking in the near

future to the construction of the temples in St. Louis, Missouri; Bogotá, Colombia; and Guayaquil, Ecuador.

We are also pleased to announce that property has been designated for the construction of a new temple in Hong Kong to serve the needs of our people in that great area of Asia; and another in Hartford, Connecticut, to accommodate Church members from the New York, Boston, and New England areas; and also another temple in Utah County to relieve the pressure on the Provo Temple, which is operating far beyond its designed capacity. We anticipate that there will be others, the locations of which will be announced later.

Thank you.

### **President Monson**

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

## **Elder Marvin J. Ashton**

### **Yearning for home**

At some time in your life, you've probably experienced the pangs of homesickness. It might have been those first times you stayed overnight with a friend or went on a sleepover, as our grandchildren call them. As much as you wanted to be with your friends, you might have been lonely for your parents and for the secure feeling of being home, where it was safe and comfortable.

Sustained homesickness might not have come until later—when you left for college or to serve a mission, or even when you were uprooted by marriage and a move far from home. Or it might have occurred when your parents divorced and you found yourself struggling to adapt to new surroundings and maybe even a stepparent and

new relatives. During these periods of adjustment and absence, you perhaps felt unsettled, lonely, and had a deep yearning for home.

Recently a mission president asked me to speak to a troubled missionary who was having extreme homesickness problems. His intense yearnings were causing poor performance, a waste of time, a lack of concentration, and a dislike for his present assignment. I took the occasion to tell him that some of the right kind of homesickness could be desirable, but it must be kept under control. Let me say at the outset, *yearning* is defined as "to have a strong or deep desire; be filled with longing" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, second college edition, 1982). This missionary seemed very sincere in wanting to do better. Proper yearnings for home can be beneficial.

### **An anchor, a port, a refuge**

Not just children but all of us will want to think of home under joyous or trying circumstances. We let ourselves become homesick for love, acceptance, security, understanding, and guidance that generally are taught and shared there. Home should be the place in which a person can unburden his soul and find renewed strength to face the world; where there is comfort, joy, and understanding; where best friends live; and where we can learn to be our best selves.

There is a certain kind of yearning for home we should never want to lose. Home should be an anchor, a port in a storm, a refuge, a happy place in which to dwell, a place where we are loved and where we can love. Home should be where life's greatest lessons are taught and learned. Home and family can be the center of one's earthly faith, where love and mutual responsibility are appropriately blended. Thinking of home with its pleasant and happy memories can make us stronger during our present and future days here upon the earth.

### **President Benson's childhood home**

President Benson has always loved his childhood home. He loves Whitney, Idaho, his birthplace. He loves the homestead where all eleven children were born and reared by noble parents.

Over a lifetime of worldwide travel, he yearned to return often to his home, and he did so. His heart has always been in Cache Valley. He loved going back and visiting with family members still there and seeing the friends of his birth, his neighbors, his teachers, his bishops, his kin who had such an impact for good on his life. He calls them "the finest people in all the world," and Whitney "the ideal farm community."

It revitalizes President Benson to go back to his roots, to go back to the

land that nourished him and built character in him and provided him the sacred beginnings of a life devoted to God, family, and country. Truly, President Benson loves his childhood home.

### **Yearning for our heavenly home**

I am concerned for people today who do not have a longing for or thoughts of home. It is unfortunate that among us we have people who have never experienced home life that has been and is desirable so that there can be an anxiousness under control for thoughts toward home. Our responsibilities are to share the warmth of our homes by being good neighbors and friends.

To know who we are is important, but to know where we are in relationship to our earthly home and heavenly home is essential if we are to receive all the blessings our Father in Heaven has for those who love him and keep his commandments. Our eternal home is our ultimate destination. A proper yearning for home can prevent our getting lost in detours or paths that lead us away.

### **Young Women anxious to go home**

It is reported that one summer at a Young Women's conference in Alberta, Canada, three hundred girls were camped in tents scattered among tall pines. It rained every day and was very cold and wet. Even so, there was no murmuring in the camp. On the last day of the conference, the leader addressed the young women under cloudy skies. Despite the unseasonable cold, there was a feeling of warmth among them for this their temporary home. Maybe because of the cold they were all drawn together and felt warm from the inside out.

The speaker began her remarks by asking, "Where are you going following this outdoor conference?" The united



chorus of three hundred young women resounded through the tall pines. "Home!" they cried out. "Where?" they were asked again, and they responded with even greater conviction: "Home!" They knew where they wanted to go most of all and were anxious to get there.

The most attractive home that we will ever share will be that abode with our families with appropriate relationship to our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

### **The prodigal son turns homeward**

Even the prodigal son could not resist the pull of home. He spurned his father, his home life, and his heritage, lavishly wasting his inheritance on riotous living. When he had nothing and was reduced to living off the spoils that only swine would eat, his thoughts turned homeward. Could there have been moments, as he gleaned the fields for husks to eat, when he longed for the security, safety, and acceptance he'd had before? Might he have been deeply homesick? Repentant, and hoping his father would accept him as a servant, he finally returned home. His father rejoiced, welcoming him back with open arms and complete acceptance. He no doubt knew that welcoming his wayward son was crucial if he hoped to ever return to his heavenly home. (See Luke 15:11-32.)

### **Being homesick isn't all bad**

Over the years I've counseled with many whose homesickness threatened to interfere with their missions, marriages, and families.

But I've come to see that being homesick isn't all bad. It's natural to miss the people you are closest to. It's normal to long to be where you feel secure, where those you love have your best interests at heart. It's understandable to want to return to the place

where you learned how to walk and talk, where you felt loved even when friends turned away, and where you were accepted regardless of the situation. There's no place on earth that can take the place of a home where love has been given and received.

### **Heartbreak of having no home**

Recently we've witnessed the tragic devastation that Hurricane Andrew left in its wake in southern Florida and Louisiana. Tens of thousands of people have lost their homes. Armed forces personnel have raised tent cities to try to at least provide these victims with shelter. But the sobering fact is that, at least for a time, many of these people literally cannot go home. I cannot imagine how they must yearn for what they so recently had.

I have known other men and women who, for one reason or another, could not go home or who had no home to go to. I have felt their pain and seen their tears. It is at best a heartbreaking situation.

### **Satan wants us to forget about home**

In another application, I have also known men and women who have jeopardized the privilege of returning to their heavenly home. Some were dealing with problems that made them ineligible to enter the temple and make the eternal covenants that bind us to our eternal home. I have felt their heartache and their longing for opportunities that, at least for a time, were beyond their reach.

The ramifications are poignant and endless. Perhaps we've all had these overwhelming thoughts come to mind: What if I am unworthy? What if I could never go home?

If he could have his way, Satan would distract us from our heritage. He would have us become involved in a million and one things in this life—

probably none of which is very important in the long run—to keep us from concentrating on the things that are really important, particularly the reality that we are God's children. He would like us to forget about home and family values. He'd like to keep us so busy with comparatively insignificant things that we don't have time to make the effort to understand where we came from, whose children we are, and how glorious our ultimate homecoming can be!

### **Our spiritual heritage**

We are literally the children of our Heavenly Father. We kept our first estate. During our experience in premortality, we lived with and were cared for and taught by a loving Father. Among other things, we were schooled in what had to be a perfect spiritual and educational environment. And we rejoiced when told of the plan whereby we could prove ourselves. Hence the day arrived when it was our turn to experience a period of probation and testing, a period during which a veil would be drawn over our memories so that we would be free either to walk by faith and by the Spirit or to forsake our spiritual heritage and birthright.

Now we're here. And I'm sure we would all agree that this second estate has lived up to its billing. It is a time of testing, of probation. The challenges and duties and responsibilities at times seem to overshadow almost everything else. Sadly, it's easy to become so encumbered by the press of daily life that we lose our focus.

### **Focus on what really matters**

One definition of the word *focus* is "directed attention" or "emphasis" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*). Perhaps as much as anything in this day and age of mass media, instantaneous worldwide communications,

and modern conveniences that seem to help us pack more into each day than would have been considered possible just a few decades ago, we need to focus on and direct our attention to the things that really matter. And simply, what really matters is a personal testimony of Jesus Christ, an understanding of who we are and what we're doing here, and an absolute determination to return home.

What young musician, finally scheduled to debut in a capacity concert hall after years of agonizing rehearsal, would, while en route to the performance, stop to join a long line forming at the latest hit movie, forgetting the thousands of people waiting to hear her?

What world-class runner, after training for well over a decade, would find himself in the Olympic finals, only to stop running halfway through his race to watch the high-jump finals taking place on the other side of the field?

These examples may seem preposterous, but how much more tragic it is for someone who, equipped with a testimony of the truth and a knowledge of the purpose of life, becomes more absorbed in life today than in life forever; who's just a little more concerned about his or her status and standing in mortality than in eternity; whose focus is not directed to God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, with whom it is possible to have a glorious connection and bond.

### **Pursue things higher than the earth**

I fear that at times we run the risk of acting like seasoned, conditioned athletes who are more interested in what kind of jogging suits we'll wear than in buckling down to train for the race. C. S. Lewis had an intriguing way of evaluating this dilemma: "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an igno-

rant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. . . . We are far too easily pleased" (*A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968], p. 168).

The prophet Mormon put it another way: "Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?" (Mormon 8:38).

When we have a yearning and don't know what it is for, perhaps it's our soul longing for its heartland, longing to be no longer alienated from the Lord and the pursuit of something much higher, better, and more fulfilling than anything this earth has to offer.

### **"See that ye fall not out"**

After Joseph, son of Jacob, had been reunited with his brothers, he

asked them to return home to Canaan to bring his father, Jacob, to him in Egypt. As the brothers were preparing to depart, Joseph said to them simply, "See that ye fall not out by the way" (Genesis 45:24).

Might our Heavenly Father have given us much the same counsel as we departed his presence to begin our earthly sojourn?

May our yearning for home be the motivation we need to so live that we can return to our heavenly home with God our Father on a forever basis, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

Elders Lino Alvarez and Dallas N. Archibald, who were called as members of the Seventy since April conference, will now address us.

## **Elder Lino Alvarez**

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel very humble as I stand at the same pulpit where so many men of God come to teach us the eternal truths of the everlasting gospel.

I pray that the Spirit of the Lord may be present this afternoon so that as I express myself in a language which is not my own, you may understand in your mind and in your heart what I will try to say, that his promise that we both may be edified and rejoice together may be fulfilled (see D&C 50:22). I ask you to have a prayer in your heart that this may be possible.

### **Gratitude**

First of all I would like to express to my Heavenly Father gratitude for his love, his mercy, his patience, and, above all, his confidence in me. I would like to thank the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Seventy for everything they have taught me during the course of many years about the Savior and the way I can serve him better. I would also like to thank my mission president, who believed in me during my youth. He gave me confidence and nurtured my testimony of Christ and His restored gospel.

I come to this calling with a feeling of inadequacy but also with a great and solemn testimony that comes from God that I am willing to give my best to serve the Lord and his people. I received this calling through President Hinckley, who also called me as the stake mission president of the first stake in Santiago, Chile, in 1972 and later as president of the Mexico City South Mission in 1982.

### Parents laid the foundation

As I have pondered about my childhood, my youth, and my adult life, I believe that the foundation for my beliefs was laid by my parents during the years of my childhood and youth. I wish to render a tribute to them. My father and mother, with no formal education, knew how to teach the eternal principles of the gospel. I am the tenth child in a family of twelve children—ten boys and two girls.

The Lord gave to Israel, through Moses, the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. I wish to call to your attention today the fifth of these commandments, which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

There are two things that our parents did with all of their children for which we now honor them. First, they taught us correct principles and helped us walk uprightly before the Lord and live his commandments. Second, they taught us the value of work, personal integrity, and family unity. Even though not all of us are members of the Church, we have tried to live according to the principles they taught us.

Every year we have the opportunity to gather as a family—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—with my father. He does what Lehi did before he died, when he gathered together his children and told them:

"And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my heart might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity" (2 Nephi 1:21).

### The Lord blesses us as we serve

When I was about to go on a mission, I worried about the same things that today worry the young men and young women who will also serve missions. I worried about work, my girlfriend, school, and family. When I was old enough to go on a mission, my father was almost sixty-six years old, and I thought, My father is old, and if I leave for two years, he may die and I will not see him anymore. Who will take care of my mother? She will be all alone when he is no longer at her side.

May I tell you that I served two years in the mission, I served in the Church schools in Chile for five years, I served as a mission president for three years and as a Regional Representative for six years, and my father is still here at the head of the family. He was born a month after President Benson, so last month he turned ninety-three years old.

I testify that when we serve the Lord with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength, he blesses us.

I also wish to render tribute to the parents of my loving companion, who taught her as my parents did me. I thank them for having accepted the gospel even before she was born.

### Honor parents day by day

I testify that an excellent way to honor our parents is to keep the commandments and serve the Lord.

After having been set apart to serve in the Second Quorum of the Seventy, I, with my wife and one of our children, visited my father. We asked him to give me a blessing, something which I have always striven to do when I have received a new priesthood assignment. He laid his hands upon my head and gave me a short but grand blessing. He said, "Son, I bless you that the Holy Spirit may accompany you, your wife, and your children in everything you do." What more could I wish for?

I would also like to thank my sweet companion and my dear children, two of whom are now serving full-time missions, and the third is awaiting his call. Without their love and confidence I could do nothing. I love them dearly, and I trust them completely.

I invite all who are listening, young and old alike, to honor their parents day by day and to try to do those things that bring honor to them.

## Testimony

I testify with all my heart that God lives, that his Son, Jesus Christ, honored him by keeping his commandments and obeying his will. Our Savior taught us this when he said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

I testify that the Savior is our example and model of life. We must strive every day to follow his teachings and do the things that he did, for "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19).

I testify that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that through him the fulness of the gospel has been restored to bless the families of the earth. I also testify that Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet of God for our day and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living Church upon the face of the earth. I testify of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Dallas N. Archibald

### Responsibilities of parents

Recently I had the opportunity to sit at the back of a chapel during a sharing time session of Primary and watch a lively group of youngsters keep a music teacher very busy. For a final song the director asked the children to sing "I Am a Child of God." They quieted down, and for the first song of the entire session the voices unified in quality instead of quantity. The words rang throughout the chapel with an angel-like resonance:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.  
Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.  
[Hymns, no. 301]

These pleading words sank deep into my heart that day and stirred my soul. What a great burden of responsibility the Lord has placed upon us as parents: to take these children and lead them in the ways of holiness, to guide them through the perils of mortality, and to walk beside them on the straight and narrow path which leads to eternity. Yes, the responsibility is ours to teach them all they must do so that someday, as the mortal is changed to immortal, they will be prepared to return to the presence of the Father and dwell with him and their Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

## Parents in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon clearly shows the value of righteousness and dedication in parents. The first statement of Nephi is a tribute to his parents: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1). Enos wrote, "And the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart" (Enos 1:3). Mormon recorded of Nephi and Lehi, the two sons of Helaman: "For they remembered the words which their father Helaman spake unto them. And these are the words which he spake" (Helaman 5:5). Here we have a tribute to a goodly parent and also the words which he spoke to his children. He reminded them of the names he had given them so that they would always seek to do good works and desire the precious gift of eternal life (see 5:6-7). Then he told them, "O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ" (5:9).

The reference to the words of King Benjamin shows that Helaman, as a parent, knew the scriptures and taught his children to follow the words of the prophets. He continued, saying, "And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation" (Helaman 5:12).

What better teaching could a parent provide for a child than that of following the prophets and building a sure foundation upon Jesus Christ? The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob instructed that once they have been taught and "obtained a hope in Christ," we may then teach them how to earn

riches so that they can use them "to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry" (Jacob 2:19). We must teach them all that they must do to live with Him, and the best teacher is example.

## Teach with kindness and love

As I sat there in the back of the chapel, I silently asked myself, "Am I doing all the things which I must do? Can my wife and daughter walk alongside me with confidence that I will lead them into the celestial kingdom? 'Lead me, guide me, walk beside me. . . .' Stop. Stop for one minute and ask the same question of yourself: 'Can my spouse and children walk alongside me with confidence that I will lead them into the celestial kingdom?' The Savior said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God' (Matthew 6:33).

The instructions are clear. We must teach, and we must be an example of those teachings. But many times in our zeal to persuade others to righteousness we begin to use force, which results in rebellion. Attempting to force others to accept our way of thinking will cause them to close their minds to our teachings and ultimately reject our words. They have their agency.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 121, the Lord explains the proper way to teach. He said, "Only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul" (121:41-42). How I love those words "enlarge the soul." Proper teaching will enlarge the soul.

For example, let us compare a child to an empty glass, and our knowledge and experience, which have accumulated over the years, to a bucketful of water. Logic and physics tell us that we cannot pour a bucketful of water directly into a small glass. However, by our using correct principles of transferring knowledge, the glass can be

enlarged. Those principles are persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness and meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge. They will enlarge the glass, which is the soul of the child, allowing that child to receive much more than the original bucketful.

Behavioral psychologists have written libraries of books on this subject. The Lord gave us the same information in just a few verses of scripture. We must always teach, lead, and guide in a way which will create high levels of self-esteem in our children and others.

### Emphasize the good

To create and maintain self-esteem, our words and our actions must always express to the individual that he or she is important and capable. The words the scriptures use are "to lift." The psychologists would say, "Reinforce the positive." The secret is simple. Always look for the good in the individual and lift; reinforce the positive by words and actions. Put-downs, words like *stupid* or *dummy*, or phrases like "Why can't you do anything right?" destroy self-esteem and shouldn't be part of our vocabulary. It is impossible to emphasize the good in others if negative words or phrases are readily available on the tips of our tongues or expressed through our gestures.

The plea behind the words "Walk beside me, Help me find the way" is this: "Lift me. Strengthen my feeble knees. Let me know that I am important and capable" (see D&C 81:5).

### How to correct and discipline

When correction and discipline must take place, it is essential to continue lifting and strengthening, ensuring that the feelings of being important and capable are not lost. Again, in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord explains how: "Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then show-

ing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved" (121:43).

As Elder Maxwell has observed, the word *betimes* is casually assumed to mean "from time to time" or "occasionally," when actually it means "early on." Therefore, correction must take place early on with the direction of the Holy Ghost and not in anger. One hundred and thirty-two years ago, in a discourse in this tabernacle, Brigham Young counseled, "Never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:125). The Lord said, "Showing forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:43).

The instructions on how to correct are clear and simple: early on, with the peace of the Holy Ghost, and with enough of the healing power within us to make sure that self-esteem is never wounded, ensuring always that the individual feels important and capable.

Oh, goodly parent, hear the words and respond accordingly:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.

Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.

In the holy name of Jesus Christ,  
amen.

### President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Lino Alvarez and Dallas N. Archibald of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy will then address us, and he will be followed by Elder C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy. Both of these Brethren were called since April conference.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Elder Merrill J. Bateman

### "Search the scriptures"

On numerous occasions the Lord has commanded his disciples to search the scriptures in order to learn and live the doctrines of salvation. During his mortal ministry, the Savior stated, "Search the scriptures; . . . they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). During his appearance on the Western Hemisphere following his resurrection, Christ quoted from the scriptures and then said to the Nephites: "Ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently" (3 Nephi 23:1). In our day the Lord enjoins his followers to "search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and . . . shall all be fulfilled" (D&C 1:37).

The Savior revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith that it is possible to hear his voice and know his words through the scriptures. He said:

"These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; . . .

"For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit . . . , and by my power you can read them one to another; . . .

"Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (D&C 18:34-36).

In order to come unto Christ and be perfected in him, each person needs to receive a testimony of the Lord's words. Some individuals falter because they fail to open the books, others because they read casually. As one would expect, there is a difference between diligent searching or pondering over the scriptures and casual reading. A Church history story illustrates the difference.

### The search for a lost pioneer child

A small six-year-old boy wandered away from his handcart company during a storm and was lost. When the

storm subsided, Robert and Ann Parker realized their boy was missing and began searching. For two days an organized search was unsuccessful. The decision was made that the company must move on because of the approaching winter.

A pioneer journal records the following:

"Ann Parker pinned a bright [red] shawl about the thin shoulders of her husband and sent him back alone on the trail to search again for their child. If he found him dead he was to wrap him in the shawl; if alive, the shawl would be a flag to signal her. Ann and her children took up their load and struggled on with the company, while Robert retraced the miles of . . . trail, calling, and searching and praying for his helpless little son."

One suspects that he did not just casually look behind a few trees or leisurely walk along the trail, but that he vigorously investigated every thicket, every clump of trees and gully or wash.

"At last he reached a . . . trading station where he learned that his child had been found and cared for by a woodsman and his wife. [The boy] had been ill from exposure and fright. [But] God had heard the prayers of his people.

"Out on the trail each night Ann and her children kept watch and, when, on the third night the rays of the setting sun caught the glimmer of a bright red shawl [above her husband's head], the brave little mother sank in a pitiful heap in the sand. . . . [She] slept for the first time in six . . . days."

### Search diligently, not casually

The story illustrates the difference between just looking and searching diligently. A casual, infrequent exposure to the scriptures will generally not open the door to the whisperings of the



Spirit or provide insights into the Savior's life and character. We need to search the scriptures with the same vigor of Robert hunting for his son and with the consistency of the mother searching the horizon if we expect to hear his voice and know his words. President Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve stated the following in a general conference address:

"Those who delve into the scriptural library . . . find that to understand requires more than casual reading or perusal—there must be concentrated study. . . . One who studies the scriptures every day accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing."<sup>2</sup>

### **Importance of the scriptures to Lehi**

The importance of possessing and searching the Lord's words is illustrated in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Lehi and his family had traveled from Jerusalem to the borders of the Red Sea and then a further three days' journey into the wilderness when the Lord reminded Lehi that he was spiritually unarmed. The family, in their haste to leave Jerusalem, had not taken the scriptures with them. They did not have the words of the Lord to earlier prophets.

Lehi was commanded in a dream to send his sons back to Jerusalem for a set of brass plates which contained the writings of the prophets and the genealogy of his forefathers. After considerable difficulty and time, the sons returned to the father's tent with the plates. After the family gave thanks to the Lord for the safe return of the sons, the Book of Mormon states that they "searched [the plates] and found that they were desirable; yea, even of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children" (1 Nephi 5:21).

The plates of brass coupled with their own records allowed the family to pass the words of the Lord from one generation to the next. Scriptures and prayer became the primary means by which each succeeding generation developed faith in Christ.

### **Blessings of searching the scriptures**

There are certain blessings obtained when one searches the scriptures. As a person studies the words of the Lord and obeys them, he or she draws closer to the Savior and obtains a greater desire to live a righteous life. The power to resist temptation increases, and spiritual weaknesses are overcome. Spiritual wounds are healed.

### **Hold fast to the iron rod**

Lehi's great visionary dream came soon after he had searched the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 8). In the dream Lehi saw a tree which produced a fruit which was exceedingly white, very sweet to the taste, and desirable above all other fruit. He saw a path leading to the tree and a rod of iron along the path. He saw mists of darkness on the path, which caused some to lose their way and wander off. Others reached the tree by holding to the rod, but then became ashamed, let go of the rod of iron, and fell away. According to the vision, the only way to reach the tree and become a permanent partaker of the fruit was to "continually [hold] fast" to the iron rod (1 Nephi 8:30).

What was the rod of iron? Nephi defined it as the "word of God"—the words of the living prophets and the scriptures, which point people to Christ. Nephi further stated that those who hearkened and held fast to the word of God would never perish. (See 1 Nephi 15:24.)

The tree in the dream is the tree of life, which represents God's love for us as expressed in the condescension of

the Father and the Son (see 1 Nephi 11). Holding fast to the iron rod builds faith in Christ and his work.

### Nourish the seed

The prophet Alma, living five hundred years after Lehi, was strongly impacted by Lehi's vision of the tree of life. Alma, however, changes the imagery in an interesting way. He likens the word of God to a seed which is planted in the heart and then nourished. He states that if people will no more than desire to believe in Christ, the seed will sprout and grow, and they will feel a swelling inside as the seed enlarges the soul. The desire to believe, coupled with obedience, eventually turns to faith in Jesus Christ.

Alma states that continued nourishment will cause the seed to grow into the tree of life with fruit that is exceedingly white, sweet, and pure—"a tree springing up unto everlasting life" (Alma 32:41; see also 32:26-42). In Alma's example, the tree of life grows within each person to change his or her heart and soul. Holding fast to the iron rod in Lehi's dream is the equivalent.

Alma's explanation of the tree growing within and changing people's hearts gives light to an earlier set of questions that he asked Church members. The questions were: "Have ye

spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" (Alma 5:14). Changes in the heart and soul occur as a result of planting and nourishing the seed. Scripture study, prayer, obedience, and service are key elements in building faith in Christ.

President Benson, in the April 1986 general conference, expressed these thoughts: "However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life."<sup>3</sup> Brothers and sisters, I testify that President Benson is the Lord's prophet, that Jesus is the Christ, and I pray that we may hear his voice by searching the scriptures, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Camilla W. Judd, in Kate B. Carter, comp., *Treasures of Pioneer History*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1952-57), 5:240-41; see also Allan K. Burgess, *How to Understand and Enjoy the Scriptures* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986), pp. 6-7.
2. In Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 64.
3. "The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82.

## Elder C. Max Caldwell

### The meaning of charity

I have come to know something of the value of the Book of Mormon as a witness for Christ, and I treasure the teachings contained in its sacred pages. Today I would like to discuss one of its unique precepts.

As a young man on a mission, I recall reading Paul's words to the Corinthian Saints and pondering what he meant by the phrase "faith, hope,

charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Corinthians 13:13). I wondered why charity should be the greatest. *Charity* was a word I did not understand. Part of the reason for my dilemma was that the common use of the term *charity* did not seem to be consistent with the doctrinal or scriptural use.

As I searched the pages of the Book of Mormon, I gained a new view.

Mormon, an ancient prophet of the Americas, connected the word *charity* to the Savior. He declared that "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47).

I considered what was meant by the phrase "love of Christ." That answer is critical because "the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love" (2 Nephi 26:30). If we must have charity, then we must know what it is. The phrase "love of Christ" might have meaning in three dimensions:

1. Love *for* Christ
2. Love *from* Christ
3. Love *like* Christ

### Love for Christ

First, love *for* Christ. This concept proclaims Jesus as the object of our love, and our lives should be an external expression of our gratitude for him. Sometimes that is difficult to do. I once visited a high priests group meeting where an older brother taught us. He noted that "as a people we often pray, 'We thank thee for all the blessings we enjoy.' But what about the blessings we don't enjoy? It can be very hard to be thankful for those." This dear man had just experienced his first Christmas without his sweetheart in more than fifty years. It is difficult to be grateful to the Lord under circumstances we don't enjoy.

Our beloved President Benson told some of his experiences with the Saints in war-torn countries and shared the following: "One sister walked over a thousand miles with four small children, leaving her home in Poland. She lost all four to starvation and the freezing conditions. Yet she stood before us in her emaciated condition, her clothing shredded, and her feet wrapped in burlap, and bore testimony of how blessed she was" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, pp. 47-48; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, p. 33). Things we don't enjoy

must not overshadow our reasons to maintain our love for the Savior. Otherwise we may lose our perspective or become bitter, and our love for Christ may be lost.

How deeply do we love him? Does our love depend on favorable environments? Is it diminished or strengthened by our experiences? Is our love for him evident by our behavior and our attitude? Charity, or love *for* Christ, sustains us in every need and influences us in every decision.

### Love from Christ

A second dimension of the meaning of charity is love *from* Christ. From a prophet of the Book of Mormon comes an inspired explanation. Speaking to the Lord, Moroni declared:

"Thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world. . . .

"This love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity" (Ether 12:33-34).

Through his compliance with the severe requirements of the Atonement, the Savior offered the ultimate expression of love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And by permitting his Son to make such a selfless and suffering sacrifice, the Father provided us with an ultimate expression of his love as his gift to the rest of his children.

The Apostle John accurately testified of this infinite though conditional representation of the charity of the Gods when he wrote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This gift of charity is to be received. The Savior's act of redemption for our sins is of no effect without our willingness to comply with the conditions of his atonement.

Speaking of the need for us to receive the divine love of God, Moroni prayerfully declared, "Except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father" (Ether 12:34).

Some years ago I prepared to teach a class on a subject I felt would be particularly difficult. The night before the scheduled class, I prayed for guidance and then retired, still troubled in my mind. When I awoke, a certain thought was introduced to my mind that I shared with the class later that morning. After the class, a young man spoke with me privately and said, "The lesson was for me. I now know what I have to do." Later I learned that he had come to that class as his first contact with the Church in many years. He then proceeded to get his life in order and eventually served a faithful mission. Presently he is experiencing the happiness associated with keeping eternal family covenants. He possesses the gift of charity because he received the atoning love of Christ.

### Love like Christ

A third perception of charity is to possess a love that is *like* Christ. In other words, people are the object of Christlike love. Nephi said: "I have charity for my people. . . . I have charity for the Jew. . . . I also have charity for the Gentiles" (2 Nephi 33:7-9).

Since Nephi had such love for everyone, we wonder how he acquired it. He must have lived in anticipation of the divine directive that would later be proclaimed by the Savior as the key to the development of love: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*" (John 13:34; italics added).

Jesus' love was inseparably connected to and resulted from his life of serving, sacrificing, and giving in behalf of others. We cannot develop Christlike love except by practicing the process prescribed by the Master.

The Apostle John was not only loved by the Lord, but he also loved others *like* the Lord. John affirmed the process by saying, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Is it a coincidence that missionaries give a portion of their lives in behalf of others, then come home and testify of their great love for the people they have served? Is it any wonder that bishops and other priesthood and auxiliary leaders who sacrifice for others are filled with love for those who are recipients of their labors? Is there a greater love among mortals than that of a mother, who offers all for her child? Many who desire to have charity like Jesus attain it as he did.

On one occasion my wife expected to be away for the weekend and asked one of the sisters in our ward to teach her Relief Society lesson. The week following the session, that sister came to our home and returned the instruction manual. She also brought to my wife a freshly baked loaf of bread and a handwritten note that read, "I love you. You are a special person. Thank you for thinking of me." She was grateful to have been asked to serve. She was full of the love of Christ.

Charity is not just a precept or a principle, nor is it just a word to describe actions or attitudes. Rather, it is an internal condition that must be developed and experienced in order to be understood. We are possessors of charity when it is a part of our nature. People who have charity have a love for the Savior, have received of his love, and love others as he does.

### Charity in the scriptures

It may be of some significance to note that the word *charity* does not appear in a single verse in the Old Testament. Surely the prophets of ancient times understood the need for charity

as did the Apostle Paul and the prophets of ancient America. And surely those prophets knew and taught that “charity is the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). We are left to wonder if the enemies of Christ deliberately removed from the holy writings these saving truths as part of the plain and precious teachings that Nephi prophetically said would be removed (see 1 Nephi 13:20–29). Also, charity is only partially explained in the New Testament. But thankfully the Book of Mormon, another witness for Christ, has restored to us an understanding of this eternal precept. I testify that as we abide by this precept, we will draw nearer to God. Indeed, we will become more like him.

Individually and collectively, we can experience the peace and happiness enjoyed for nearly two hundred years anciently when “there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (4 Nephi 1:15). This I know, as I know the Savior lives, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just listened to Elders Merrill J. Bateman and C. Max Caldwell of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### “See that ye be not troubled”

Living in these difficult times, brothers and sisters, requires each one of us to maintain a positive, hopeful perspective about the future. Today, more so than in the past, I am asked about the signs of the times and if I think the end of the world is near. My answer is the same one that Jesus gave some two thousand years ago:

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13:32–33).

When Jesus was asked about the sign of His coming, he said:

“Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: *see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass*, but the end is not yet.

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

“All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6–8; italics added).

### Acceleration of worldwide calamity

Although the prophecies tell us that these things are to take place, more and more people are expressing great alarm at what appears to be an acceleration of worldwide calamity. As members of the Church, we must not forget the Savior’s admonition: “Be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass.” These are difficult times, when the forces of nature seem to be unleashing a flood of “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

Recently I read a newspaper article that cited statistics from the U.S. Geological Survey indicating that earthquakes around the world are increasing in frequency and intensity. According to the article, only two major earthquakes (earthquakes measuring at least six on the Richter scale) occurred during the 1920s. In the 1930s the number increased to five, and then it decreased

to four during the 1940s. But in the 1950s, nine major earthquakes occurred, followed by fifteen during the 1960s, forty-six during the 1970s, and fifty-two during the 1980s. Already almost as many major earthquakes have occurred during the 1990s as during the entire decade of the 1980s.

The world is experiencing violent disorders, both physical and social. Here in the United States we are still reeling from two incredibly destructive hurricanes. People in the Philippines see no end to the devastation of the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Famine grips portions of Africa, where tragic human suffering is prevalent. To a lesser degree, hunger afflicts millions, even in countries that have a high standard of living.

Political unrest, warfare, and economic chaos prevail in many parts of the world, and the plagues of pornography, drug misuse, immorality, AIDS, and child abuse become more oppressive with each passing day. The media busily satisfies an apparently insatiable appetite of audiences to witness murder, violence, nudity, sex, and profanity. Is not this the day of which Moroni spoke when he recorded: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Mormon 8:35). And then he prophesied of conditions of the world as they are today.

### **We must never give up hope**

Brothers and sisters, whether or not these are indeed the last days or even "the beginning of sorrows" as the Savior foretold, some of us may find our lives laden with frustration, disappointment, and sorrow. Many feel helpless to deal with the chaos that seems to prevail in the world. Others anguish over family members who are being carried downstream in a swift, raging current of weakening values and

declining moral standards. Children particularly are suffering as society drifts further and further away from the commandments of God.

Many have even resigned themselves to accept the wickedness and cruelty of the world as being irreparable. They have given up hope. They have decided to quit trying to make the world a better place in which they and their families can live. They have surrendered to despair.

Admittedly we have ample reason to be deeply concerned because we see no immediate answers to the seemingly unsolvable problems confronting the human family. But regardless of this dark picture, which will ultimately get worse, we must never allow ourselves to give up hope! Moroni, having seen our day, counseled, "Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope" (Moroni 10:20).

### **The Lord is in control**

To all who have harbored feelings of despair and an absence of hope, I offer the words of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

"Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:34, 36). "Even so am I in the midst of you" (D&C 6:32).

My message to you today, my brothers and sisters, is simply this: the Lord is in control. He knows the end from the beginning. He has given us adequate instruction that, if followed, will see us safely through any crisis. His purposes will be fulfilled, and someday we will understand the eternal reasons for all of these events. Therefore, today we must be careful not to overreact, nor should we be caught up in extreme

preparations; but what we must do is keep the commandments of God and never lose hope!

### **Turn to Christ for hope and safety**

But where do we find hope in the midst of such turmoil and catastrophe? Quite simply, our one hope for spiritual safety during these turbulent times is to turn our minds and our hearts to Jesus Christ. The prophet Mormon taught:

“Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope” (Moroni 7:41–42).

Faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, is absolutely essential for us to maintain a balanced perspective through times of trial and difficulty. Remember, nothing will occur in our lives that He does not understand. Alma taught, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people” (Alma 7:11).

Please turn to Him if you are discouraged and struggling for direction in your life. Armed with the shield of faith, we can overcome many of our daily challenges and overpower our greatest weaknesses and fears, knowing that if we do our best to keep the commandments of God, come what may, we will be all right.

Of course that does not necessarily mean that we will be spared personal suffering and heartache. Righteousness has never precluded adversity. But faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—*real* faith, whole-souled and unshakable—is a power to be reckoned with in the universe. It can be a causative force

through which miracles are wrought. Or it can be a source of inner strength through which we find peace, comfort, and the courage to cope.

### **Hope grows out of faith**

As we put our faith and trust to work, hope is born. Hope grows out of faith and gives meaning and purpose to all that we do. It can even give us the peaceful assurance we need to live happily in a world that is ripe with iniquity, calamity, and injustice.

As the end of the Savior’s mortal ministry drew near, He offered this reassuring hope to His beloved disciples: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

Hope is a precious principle by which to live. However, some among us may have lost all hope because of sin and transgression. A person can become so deeply immersed in the ways of the world that he sees no way out and loses all hope. My plea to all who have fallen into this trap of the adversary is to never give up! Regardless of how desperate things may seem or how desperate they may yet become, please believe me, you can always have hope. Always.

### **Repentance brings a father peace**

Recently I had the privilege of performing the temple sealing ordinances for a wonderful family. It was a beautiful occasion, as such ceremonies almost always are. But if you had known the father of this family several years earlier, you would have understood what a miracle was taking place in the house of the Lord that day. With his permission I quote from a letter he wrote to me:

“I was born into the Church and was taught the gospel at my mother’s

knee. Through her diligence and perseverance, she kindled a small ember of testimony that never left me even through some of the roughest times of my life. In my teen years Satan hit me hard. It was during the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time of great turmoil, and Satan was hard at work on me. I was taken with the practice of free drugs, free love, free fun, and the rest of the world be damned. Beginning with my first drink of alcohol, I began to slowly deteriorate. After alcohol, other drugs were that much easier to use. In order to take drugs, you must become a good liar. You learn to do whatever it takes to conceal your behavior from others.

"After many years of living this way, all my moral fiber seemed to be completely eroded away. I had a minimal amount of conscience and had sunk to the depths of despair and depression. I watched friends die from drugs and suicide. As time passed, my friends and I were exposed to the criminal justice system. In fact, many of my former friends are still in prison. Had it not been for the small flicker of testimony instilled in me by my mother when I was a child, to know that Heavenly Father could still love me, I have reservations as to whether I would even be writing this letter today."

Some parents might have given up hope on this prodigal son, but not this man's mother. She continued to believe that he would find his way back to the teachings of his childhood and once again place his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. With the loving support of his family and friends, that is exactly what he did. Let me read again from his letter:

"If there is one thing I have learned, it is that no matter how lost you feel, no matter how low you may have sunk, there can be forgiveness and peace. I learned that the further one drifts from the Lord, the harder it is to return to Him and His teachings. But once I opened my heart and called

out in prayer to Heavenly Father to help me in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, I came to know the power of repentance and the blessings of obedience to God's commandments."

Brothers and sisters, I wish all of you could have been with us in the temple that day to feel the joy of hope fulfilled. I am sure you would have sensed, as I did, the rekindled love for God and the sublime happiness that filled the heart of my friend's mother as her four sons, their companions, and other family members surrounded her in the sealing room.

### **Faith, hope, and charity**

The Apostle Paul taught that three divine principles form a foundation upon which we can build the structure of our lives. They are faith, hope, and charity. (See 1 Corinthians 13:13.) Together they give us a base of support like the legs of a three-legged stool. Each principle is significant within itself, but each also plays an important supporting role. Each is incomplete without the others. Hope helps faith develop. Likewise, true faith gives birth to hope. When we begin to lose hope, we are faltering also in our measure of faith. The principles of faith and hope working together must be accompanied by charity, which is the greatest of all. According to Mormon, "charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47). It is the perfect manifestation of our faith and hope.

Working together, these three eternal principles will help give us the broad eternal perspective we need to face life's toughest challenges, including the prophesied ordeals of the last days. Real faith fosters hope for the future; it allows us to look beyond ourselves and our present cares. Fortified by hope, we are moved to demonstrate the pure love of Christ through daily acts of obedience and Christian service.



### The peace of God

I assure you, my brothers and sisters, that our Heavenly Father is aware of us individually and collectively. He understands the spiritual, physical, and emotional difficulties we face in the world today. In fact, they are all part of His plan for our eternal growth and development. And His promise to us is sure: "He that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome" (D&C 63:20).

The Savior promised that "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:17).

May we all find the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phi-

liippians 4:7), which can be found only through charity, faith, and hope.

May I leave you my testimony that I know that the Lord Jesus Christ lives. He has restored His Church to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Our assurance of eternal life rests in our love of God and the keeping of His commandments. This knowledge gives me hope and faith. May it be so with each of you, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Bonfires of testimony

Many years ago, large packs of wolves roamed the countryside in Ukraine, making travel in that part of the world very dangerous. These wolf packs were fearless. They were not intimidated by people or by any of the weapons available at that time. The only thing that seemed to frighten them was fire. Consequently, travelers who found themselves away from cities developed the common practice of building a large bonfire and keeping it burning through the night. As long as the fire burned brightly, the wolves stayed away. But if it were allowed to burn out and die, the wolves would move in for an attack. Travelers understood that building and maintaining a roaring bonfire was not just a matter of convenience or comfort; it was a matter of survival. (See Mary Pratt Parrish, "Guardians of the Covenant," *Ensign*, May 1972, p. 25.)

We do not have to protect ourselves from wolf packs as we travel the

road of life today, but, in a spiritual sense, we do face the devious wolves of Satan in the forms of temptation, evil, and sin. We live in dangerous times when these ravenous wolves roam the spiritual countryside in search of those who may be weak in faith or feeble in their conviction. In his first epistle, Peter described our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion [that] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith that "enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb" (D&C 122:6). We are all vulnerable to attack. However, we can fortify ourselves with the protection provided by a burning testimony that, like a bonfire, has been built adequately and maintained carefully.

Unfortunately, some in the Church may believe sincerely that their testimony is a raging bonfire when it really is little more than the faint flickering of a candle. Their faithfulness has more

to do with habit than holiness, and their pursuit of personal righteousness almost always takes a back seat to their pursuit of personal interests and pleasure. With such a feeble light of testimony for protection, these travelers on life's highways are easy prey for the wolves of the adversary.

### Strengthening Peter's testimony

The Savior understood that many of His followers would struggle under the rigors of true discipleship; consequently, He taught them how to build burning testimonies. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus shared the feast of the Passover with His twelve beloved Apostles, most of whom had been with Him throughout His ministry. At one point during this sacred evening, the Lord looked upon Peter, His senior Apostle and loyal friend. Knowing what would be required of Peter after the Ascension, the Lord said:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and *when thou art converted*, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32; italics added).

Imagine for a moment that you are Peter. Three years ago a holy stranger invited you to set aside your fishing boat and nets, your means of support for yourself and your family, and then asked you to follow Him. You did so without hesitation, and for three years you have continued to follow and to love and support and sustain Him. You have seen Him confound the wise, comfort the weary and the afflicted, heal the sick, and raise the dead to life. You have seen Him conquer evil spirits, calm the troubled seas, and, for a few minutes at least, you even walked on the water toward Him. You were at His side when Moses and Elias appeared to Him; you saw Him transfigured before your very eyes. You have

committed your entire life to Him. And now He questions you by instructing you to strengthen your brethren "when thou art converted."

Peter was surprised. He assured the Lord, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33). But Jesus knew and understood. He was not condemning Peter for lack of conviction; Peter demonstrated his conviction during the Lord's arrest. Rather, the Savior was telling Peter what he needed to do when his testimony became more secure.

### Many testimonies are weak

As He knew Peter, the Lord understands you and me when our testimonies may not be the brightly burning bonfire you may think they are or want them to be. Perhaps in some cases that testimony is constructed unwisely, built on a social foundation of programs and personalities instead of the sure rock of personal revelation. Or perhaps you have allowed your testimony to flicker gradually through the years of disuse and spiritual complacency.

Regardless of the reason your testimony may be growing dim, the Savior lovingly urges you to come unto Him and become strengthened in Him. Said He to Moroni: "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

Some people are weak in their faith and testimonies but are not even aware of how precarious their situation is. Many of them likely would be offended at the suggestion. They raise their right hand to sustain Church leaders and then murmur and complain when a decision does not square with their way of thinking. They claim to be obedient to God's commandments but do not feel at all uncomfort-

able about purchasing food at the store on Sunday and then asking the Lord to bless it. Some say they would give their lives for the Lord, yet they refuse to serve in the nursery.

The Savior spoke very explicitly about people who "draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). His words were:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

### **Suggestions to fortify testimonies**

None would want to hear the Lord speak such disappointing words of you. That is why you need to do everything in your power to be absolutely certain that your spiritual bonfire of testimony is burning brightly enough to keep the wolves of darkness away. You can always use more dry kindling. As the Apostle Paul taught, each of us has "come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us has progressed so far in this life that we do not need to continually fortify our testimonies.

I offer three suggestions that will fan the flame of personal testimony as a protection against the wolves of evil that are prowling all around us to threaten our spiritual security.

### **Build testimony on faith in Christ**

First, make sure your testimony is built upon a solid foundation of faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Even though we enjoy the fellowship of the Saints and

have strong feelings about the inspired programs of the Church, we must remember that we have only one sure anchor for our souls. It is stated in the words of the prophet Helaman when he taught his sons:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

Perhaps you are one of the members of the Church whose first contact with the gospel came through the beautiful music of the Tabernacle Choir. Maybe your life was blessed by the Church welfare program when you followed prophetic counsel to store food and other necessities. These are marvelous, inspired aspects of the Church that God has provided to help bring his children to Christ. However, they are implements and not ends in themselves. The ultimate focus of our devotion must properly be our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We often hear of members who have separated themselves from the Church because some leader, teacher, or member has said or done something to offend them. Others have had their faith shaken when the Brethren have taken a stand with which they disagree. In such cases I wonder about the faith of those people and whether it was grounded securely in a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ or merely based on their own ideas and social perceptions of what the Church and its members should be.

Scripture teaches us: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean

not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). In His moving prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, the Savior taught this profound truth: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Building a testimony on the foundation of a sincere, personal relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and on our faith in them should be our highest priority.

### **Build testimony through repentance**

Anchored with that faith, we are ready for my second suggestion—another layer of kindling on the bonfire of testimony. It is humble, sincere repentance. Few things extinguish the fervor of the Holy Spirit in the heart of any individual more quickly than does sin. It dulls the spiritual senses, diminishes confidence and personal security, and separates the sinner from the Savior. One who carries the burden of unrepented sin is more likely to rationalize additional disobedience. The more sin is rationalized, the greater the possibility of destruction by Satan's wolves.

Few would argue the potential spiritual risk of major sins like murder or marital infidelity. But what about the person who uses an employer's time to complete personal projects, the person who sneaks into a pornographic movie, the student who cheats at school, the person who criticizes others unfairly, or the parent who thinks family home evening is a good idea—for someone else?

The simple fact is this: anything that does not draw us closer to God takes us away from Him. We have no middle ground, no foggy gray area where we can sin a little without suffering spiritual decline. That is why we must repent and come to Christ daily on submissive knees so that we can

prevent our bonfires of testimony from being snuffed out by sin.

### **Follow the Savior's example**

My third suggestion is that we follow the example of the Savior. He set the pattern.

In any pursuit and under any condition, we can ask ourselves what Jesus would do and then determine our own course accordingly. For example, what sort of home teacher would the Savior be? Would He occasionally miss visiting families? Would He visit them without a message? Or would He minister to His families like the Good Shepherd that He is, with constant watch care and loving kindness? Deep in our hearts we know what kind of home teacher Jesus would be, just as we know what kind of bishop, teacher, Primary leader, clerk, or youth adviser He would be. Even though we could never in this life measure up completely to His standard of excellence, our attempt to do so will lead us to do far better than otherwise.

We can apply the same principle to other pursuits in the same way. What sort of parent would Jesus be? What sort of neighbor, employer, employee, student, or friend? If we live our lives to conform as nearly as possible to the pattern the Savior has set, our testimonies will be fortified continually and our spiritual bonfires will never be reduced to embers.

### **God will strengthen and uphold us**

We live in perilous times. The influence of Satan often appears to be unchecked and overwhelming. Remember the promise that God has given to those who build and maintain brightly burning bonfires of testimony to counter the wolves that threaten us. This is His promise: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;

yea, I will . . . uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

The strength of the Church lies in the depth and vitality of the personal testimonies of its members. Firm, secure testimonies will be the difference between faithfulness and disaffection.

I bear testimony that in order for us to enjoy a happy, rewarding, and spiritual life, we must make sure that our testimonies are built upon the foundation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, humble and sincere repentance, and following the example of the Savior.

I know that our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. Christ's atonement provides for all of us immortality and the possibility of eternal life, the kind of life that God lives, if we will repent of our sins and will be true and faithful in keeping the commandments. Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. Through him the Lord restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in these the latter days. President Ezra Taft Benson is our prophet today. I testify of these divine truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which immediately follows must be in their seats no later than 9:15 A.M.

We express gratitude to the family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon. The choir will now sing in closing "Beautiful Savior," and following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder George R. Hill III, who was released this afternoon as a member of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Beautiful Savior."

Elder George R. Hill III offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 3, 1992. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard L. Elliott was at the organ.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks:

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you this evening to this general priesthood session. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching these proceedings in his apartment, sends his love and best wishes to all who are participating. He has asked that I conduct these services.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU

Marriott Center, and locations in many countries throughout the world.

Elders Marvin J. Ashton and Gene R. Cook and Bishop Robert D. Hales are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Monte J. Brough and Richard P. Lindsay are seated on the stand in the BYU Marriott Center.

For the information of those in outlying areas, we announce that at the session this afternoon Elders Marion D. Hanks and Robert L. Backman were released as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy and given emeritus status. Elders Charles Didier and L. Aldin Porter were sustained as members of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Bishops Henry B. Eyring and Glenn L. Pace were released as first and second counselors in the Presiding Bishopric, and both were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Bishop Eyring also becomes the Church Commissioner of Education. Bishops H. David Burton and Richard C. Edgley were sustained as first and second counselors to Bishop Hales in the Presiding Bishopric.

Elders George R. Hill III, John R. Lasater, Douglas J. Martin, Glen L. Rudd, Douglas H. Smith, and Lynn A. Sorensen were released from their service as Seventies.

Elders Carlos H. Amado, Benjamin B. Banks, Spencer J. Condie, and Robert K. Dellenbach were sustained as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elders Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Merrill J. Bateman, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, John B. Dickson, John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, V. Dallas Merrell, David E. Sorensen, F. David Stanley, Kwok Yuen Tai, and Lowell D. Wood were sustained as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

Elders Merlin R. Lybbert, Clinton L. Cutler, and Ronald E. Poelman

were sustained to succeed Hugh W. Pinnock, Hartman Rector, Jr., and Clinton L. Cutler as the General Presidency of the Sunday School. Elders Stephen D. Nadauld and L. Lionel Kendrick were sustained to succeed Robert K. Dellenbach and Stephen D. Nadauld as counselors in the Young Men General Presidency.

Announcement was also made this afternoon of the design to construct temples in Hong Kong, to serve the needs of some of our people in that part of the world; in Hartford, Connecticut, to serve the needs of the people in New York and Boston and the New England area; and, at the proper time, in Utah County, to relieve the pressure on the Provo Temple, which is operating far beyond its designed capacity.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered," following which Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder Robert K. Dellenbach offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour," and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us.

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The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

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## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### Bible stories

My dear brethren, this is an important occasion, when holders of the holy priesthood all over the world gather for instruction and inspiration.

Like many of the older men in this gathering, I have sons and grandsons listening in various locations. We want this meeting to be valuable and interesting to the young men of the priesthood. I am directing my talk primarily to them.

When I was a boy, I spent most of my evenings reading books. One of my favorites was *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible*. Published by a Protestant minister to help teach Bible truths to young people, this book tells 168 stories from the Bible.

I loved these stories and read them many times. I will share some of my favorites and comment on their teachings and their impact on my life.

### Abraham and Isaac

I begin with a story I thought I understood as a boy but did not begin to understand until later.

The Lord spoke to Abraham and told him to take his son Isaac and go to the top of a mountain in the land of Moriah "and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2).

The first time I read this story I didn't know what a burnt offering was. But I lived on a farm with animals and mountains nearby, so I could easily understand the rest of the story.

Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled one of his animals, and they started out. I thought that Isaac must have felt privileged to be with his father on such a trip.

On the third day, Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain to worship. Like most young men, Isaac was curious. He saw the fire and the wood and

the knife they carried, "but," he asked his father, "where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). I did not realize until I had sons of my own how much pain Abraham must have felt when he answered simply, "My son, God will provide" (22:8).

When they came to the prescribed place, Abraham built an altar and laid wood upon it. Then, the Bible says, "Abraham . . . bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (Genesis 22:9). What did Isaac think when Abraham did such a strange thing? The Bible mentions no struggle or objection. Isaac's silence can be explained only in terms of his trust in and obedience to his father.

And then the Bible says, "Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son" (Genesis 22:10).

As you know, Abraham had passed his test, and the Lord saved young Isaac. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad," an angel commanded Abraham (Genesis 22:12). A ram whose horns were caught in a thicket became the offering, instead of Isaac.

As a young man, I saw mostly the adventure in that story, though I was surely impressed with Isaac's obedience. When I was older, I learned that the experience of Abraham and Isaac was what the scriptures call a *type*, which is a likeness or reminder of something else. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob said that the command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac was "a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5).

This story also shows the goodness of God in protecting Isaac and in providing a substitute so he would not have to die. Because of our sins and our mortality, we, like Isaac, are condemned to death. When all other hope is gone, our Father in Heaven provides the Lamb of God, and we are saved by his sacrifice.

The Apostle Paul taught that the scriptures are “given by inspiration of God” and are “profitable . . . for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). We obtain instruction in righteousness from the experiences recorded in the scriptures. They provide what we might call case studies of the results of keeping or breaking the commandments of God.

### **Joseph's integrity**

One example of special importance to young people involved young Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. Though only a slave, Joseph's abilities were so impressive to his master that he was put in charge of all that his master had in the house and in the field (see Genesis 39:4–6). Then, in that position of prominence and power, Joseph met a test.

His master's wife tempted him to commit adultery with her. Joseph rejected her advances, telling her he would not betray the trust of her husband or the even greater trust he would violate by sinning against God in doing what Joseph called “this great wickedness” (Genesis 39:9). He rejected her again and again. Then one day, when no one else was in the house, she seized hold of his clothing. In a marvelously vivid description, the scripture says, “And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (39:12).

What a persuasive instruction in righteousness! The same teaching was given in this modern revelation: “And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (D&C 38:42). Those words command all of us to follow the example of Joseph.

### **The Lord's protection of Joseph**

A common element in many of my best-loved Bible stories was the way the Lord protected his righteous and

faithful sons. When I was young, that was my favorite part of the story of Joseph.

We all remember how the jealous older sons of Jacob plotted to kill their favored younger brother. After seizing Joseph and throwing him into a pit, they decided to sell him into slavery instead. Even as they told their father that Joseph had been killed by wild beasts, the traders who had purchased him on the plains of Canaan were leading him down into Egypt and slavery. (See Genesis 37.)

In Egypt, Joseph was unjustly sent to prison. But even there he excelled, and the Lord blessed him. In time he came forth to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and he was made ruler of all Egypt. In that powerful position he became the instrument to save his people from famine and to love and forgive the brothers who had wronged him. (See Genesis 40–45.)

As a young boy, I was thrilled with Joseph's adventures and impressed with how the Lord had rescued him from the perils of murder, slavery, and prison. The first time I read the Book of Mormon, I found the statement that “Joseph . . . who was sold into Egypt . . . was preserved by the hand of the Lord” (1 Nephi 5:14). In later readings in the scriptures, I found that this kind of protection is available to all. For example, the Bible states that “the Lord preserveth the faithful” (Psalm 31:23) and that God “is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Proverbs 30:5).

### **David's faith and courage**

Another favorite example of God's protecting care is the shepherd boy David. David had a firm faith in the God of Israel, and that faith gave him great courage.

When the armies of the Philistines were gathered to battle against the Israelites, the mighty Goliath came for-



ward and hurled his challenge to individual combat. King Saul and all Israel "were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:11). Day after day he renewed his challenge, but no one would face him.

When young David came to the camp of Israel to deliver provisions, he heard Goliath's roar. In surprise David asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). David asked if he could fight the man. The king refused, saying, "Thou art but a youth" (17:33). David replied with courage and faith: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion . . . will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (17:37).

As David went onto the field of battle, Goliath mocked him for his youth, cursed him by his gods, and shouted that he would feed his flesh to the birds and beasts of the field (see 1 Samuel 17:42-44).

David's reply is one of the great expressions of faith and courage in all our literature. It thrilled me as a boy, and it still thrills me.

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

"This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:45-47).

You all know what happened next. David stunned the Philistine with a sling-stone and cut off his head with his

own sword. Frightened by the fall of their champion, the Philistines fled. Shouting in triumph, the armies of Israel pursued them and won a great victory.

Countless young people have been inspired by this marvelous instruction in righteousness. At times all of us must stand against those who mock and revile. Some of us, sometime, will face some earthly power as mighty as Goliath. When that happens, we should emulate the courage of David, who was mighty because he had faith and he went forth in a righteous cause in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

### **The Lord shields the faithful**

Our missionaries also seem weak and defenseless, powerless against the armaments of the adversary and those who serve him. But the Lord has promised them that he "will be their shield" (D&C 35:14), and that promise is fulfilled every day in many places around the world.

The shield the Lord gives to the faithful also protects us against our own harmful impulses. The revelation that commands modern Saints to refrain from alcohol, tobacco, hot drinks, and other harmful things promises the faithful that "the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them" (D&C 89:21).

### **The Lord protects Elisha**

Another story of protection involved a prophet and his young servant. Because Elisha had helped the kingdom of Israel repel the Syrians, they sent a great army with horses and chariots to capture the prophet. When Elisha's young servant saw the armies surrounding their city, he cried out in fear, but Elisha reassured him:

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The Lord intervened to confuse and blind the Syrians, and they were taken prisoners by the armies of Israel.

When I read this wonderful story as a boy, I always identified with the young servant of Elisha. I thought, If I am ever surrounded by the forces of evil while I am in the Lord's service, I hope the Lord will open my eyes and give me faith to understand that when we are in the work of the Lord, those who are with us are always more powerful than those who oppose us.

### **God's protection is a reality**

Bible stories such as these do not mean that the servants of God are delivered from all hardship or that they are always saved from death. Some believers lose their lives in persecutions, and some suffer great hardships as a result of their faith. But the protection promised to the faithful servants of God is a reality today as it was in Bible times.

All over the world, faithful Latter-day Saints are protected from the powers of the evil one and his servants until they have finished their missions in mortality. For some the mortal mission is brief, as with some valiant young men who have lost their lives in missionary service. But for most of us the mortal journey is long, and we continue our course with the protection of guardian angels.

### **Protection from a robber in Chicago**

During my life I have had many experiences of being guided in what I should do and in being protected from

injury and also from evil. The Lord's protecting care has shielded me from the evil acts of others and has also protected me from surrendering to my own worst impulses. I enjoyed that protection one warm summer night on the streets of Chicago. I have never shared this experience in public. I do so now because it is a persuasive illustration of my subject.

My wife, June, had attended a ward officers' meeting. When I came to drive her home, she was accompanied by a sister we would take home on our way. She lived in the nearby Woodlawn area, which was the territory of a gang called the Blackstone Rangers.

I parked at the curb outside this sister's apartment house and accompanied her into the lobby and up the stairs to her door. June remained in the car on 61st Street. She locked all of the doors, and I left the keys in the ignition in case she needed to drive away. We had lived on the south side of Chicago for quite a few years and were accustomed to such precautions.

Back in the lobby, and before stepping out into the street, I looked carefully in each direction. By the light of a nearby streetlight, I could see that the street was deserted except for three young men walking by. I waited until they were out of sight and then walked quickly toward our car.

As I came to the driver's side and paused for June to unlock the door, I saw one of these young men running back toward me. He had something in his right hand, and I knew what it would be. There was no time to get into the car and drive away before he came within range.

Fortunately, as June leaned across to open the door, she glanced through the back window and saw this fellow coming around the end of the car with a gun in his hand. Wisely, she did not unlock the door. For the next two or three minutes, which seemed like an

eternity, she was a horrified spectator to an event happening at her eye level, just outside the driver's window.

The young man pushed the gun against my stomach and said, "Give me your money." I took the wallet out of my pocket and showed him it was empty. I wasn't even wearing a watch I could offer him because my watchband had broken earlier that day. I offered him some coins I had in my pocket, but he growled a rejection.

"Give me your car keys," he demanded. "They are in the car," I told him. "Tell her to open the car," he replied. For a moment I considered the new possibilities that would present, and then refused. He was furious. He jabbed me in the stomach with his gun and said, "Do it, or I'll kill you."

Although this event happened twenty-two years ago, I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday. I read somewhere that nothing concentrates the mind as wonderfully as having someone stand in front of you with a deadly weapon and tell you he intends to kill you.

When I refused, the young robber repeated his demands, this time emphasizing them with an angrier tone and more motion with his gun. I remember thinking that he probably wouldn't shoot me on purpose, but if he wasn't careful in the way he kept jabbing that gun into my stomach, he might shoot me by mistake. His gun looked like a cheap one, and I was nervous about its firing mechanism.

"Give me your money." "I don't have any." "Give me your car keys." "They're in the car." "Tell her to open the car." "I won't do it." "I'll kill you if you don't." "I won't do it."

Inside the car June couldn't hear the conversation, but she could see the action with the gun. She agonized over what she should do. Should she unlock the door? Should she honk the horn? Should she drive away? Everything she considered seemed to have the possi-

bility of making matters worse, so she just waited and prayed. Then a peaceful feeling came over her. She felt it would be all right.

Then for the first time I saw the possibility of help. From behind the robber, a city bus approached. It stopped about twenty feet away. A passenger stepped off and scurried away. The driver looked directly at me, but I could see that he was not going to offer any assistance.

While this was happening behind the young robber, out of his view, he became nervous and distracted. His gun wavered from my stomach until its barrel pointed slightly to my left. My arm was already partly raised, and with a quick motion I could seize the gun and struggle with him without the likelihood of being shot. I was taller and heavier than this young man and at that time of my life was somewhat athletic. I had no doubt that I could prevail in a quick wrestling match if I could get his gun out of the contest.

Just as I was about to make my move, I had a unique experience. I did not see anything or hear anything, but I *knew* something. I knew what would happen if I grabbed that gun. We would struggle, and I would turn the gun into that young man's chest. It would fire, and he would die. I also understood that I must not have the blood of that young man on my conscience for the rest of my life.

I relaxed, and as the bus pulled away I followed an impulse to put my right hand on his shoulder and give him a lecture. June and I had some teenage children at that time, and giving lectures came naturally.

"Look here," I said. "This isn't right. What you're doing just isn't right. The next car might be a policeman, and you could get killed or sent to jail for this."

With the gun back in my stomach, the young robber replied to my lecture by going through his demands for the third time. But this time his voice was

subdued. When he offered the final threat to kill me, he didn't sound persuasive. When I refused again, he hesitated for a moment and then stuck the gun in his pocket and ran away. June unlocked the door, and we drove off, uttering a prayer of thanks. We had experienced the kind of miraculous protection illustrated in the Bible stories I had read as a boy.

I have often pondered the significance of that event in relation to the responsibilities that came later in my life. Less than a year after that August night, I was chosen as president of Brigham Young University. Almost fourteen years after that experience, I received my present calling.

### **The righteous need not fear**

I am grateful that the Lord gave me the vision and strength to refrain from trusting in the arm of flesh and to put my trust in the protecting care of our Heavenly Father. I am grateful for the Book of Mormon promise to us of

the last days that "the righteous need not fear," for the Lord "will preserve the righteous by his power" (1 Nephi 22:17). I am grateful for the protection promised to those who have kept their covenants and qualified for the blessings promised in sacred places.

These and all promises to the faithful children of God are made by the voice and power of the Lord God of Israel. I testify of that God, our Savior Jesus Christ, whose resurrection and atonement have assured immortality and provided the opportunity and direction toward eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve.

Elder Dean L. Larsen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Gary J. Coleman, who was called since April conference as one of the Seventy.

## **Elder Dean L. Larsen**

In behalf of the Presidency of the Seventy and the Quorum members, I would like to express a very warm welcome to Elders Eyring and Pace as they take their place now among the ranks of the Seventy. We also acknowledge the addition to the Seventies Quorums of the fifteen men whose names President Hinckley read to you earlier and who have been serving since mid-August. Our best wishes also to Bishop Edgley and Bishop Burton, who now take their places beside Bishop Hales in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

And we acknowledge our love and continuing deep respect and admiration for those men whose tenure as Seventies has concluded officially at this general conference.

### **The Lord will prosper the righteous**

During the conference of the Church in Fayette, New York, in 1831, the Lord gave a revelation through Joseph Smith that contains a remarkable promise:

"I have made the earth rich," the Lord declared, "and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

"And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

"And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

"And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of

your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away" (D&C 38:17–20).

The Lord has demonstrated throughout the generations that when the inhabitants of the earth remember him and are obedient to his direction, he will bless them not only with spiritual blessings but with material abundance as well.

### **Prosperity of Lehi's people**

The scriptures contain many evidences of the Lord's willingness to prosper his people with the riches of the earth when they demonstrate that they will use this abundance prudently, with humility and charity, always acknowledging the source of their blessings.

When the people of Lehi arrived in the Americas from the Old World, they felt a great dependence upon the Lord as they established their homes and worked to provide for themselves. Nephi makes this entry in his record:

"And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things. . . .

"And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly; for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind. . . .

"And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land" (2 Nephi 5:10–11, 13).

### **Prosperity of Alma's people**

This kind of material prosperity has always been a fragile thing. It has proved to be one of the greatest tests with which a people can be confronted. The essential human qualities and other factors that generate abundance

have always been difficult to sustain. We see this reflected in an episode that is described in the first chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon.

As I read several of the verses from this account, make particular note of the elements that contribute to the material successes of the people and then the factors that lead to their subsequent misfortunes.

"And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

"And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

"And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace. . . .

"And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need—an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.

"And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and

free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

"And thus they did prosper" (Alma 1:26-31).

### Obedience brings prosperity

It has always been so. When the lives of the people are in harmony with the Lord's will, all of the essential factors that produce the blessings God deigns to give to his children seem to come into line. Love and harmony prevail. Even the weather, the climate, and the elements seem to respond. Peace and tranquillity endure. Industry and progress mark the lives of the people. It is as the Lord has promised:

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

"And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid" (Leviticus 26:3-6).

### Forgetting the source of blessings

Perhaps the greatest tragedies of all time have occurred when people have received the promised blessings of the Lord and then have forgotten the source of their good life. Moses cautioned the people of Israel against this natural inclination when he said:

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes. . . .

"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

"And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

"Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, . . .

"And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17; italics added).

### Alma's people become proud

Returning to the account in Alma to which I made earlier reference, not many years passed away from the time of prosperity described in such glowing terms until the people began to take all of the credit for the good times unto themselves. We find this sad entry in Alma's record:

"And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes. . . .

"The people of the church began . . . to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another" (Alma 4:6, 8).

### Cycle of prosperity in Helaman's day

The same cycle occurred in the days of Helaman. At one point Helaman describes his people in this way:

"And it came to pass that in this same year there was exceedingly great prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance.

"And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure" (Helaman 3:24-25).

It was not long until the full cycle was completed, however. Within five years from the period just cited, Helaman makes this report regarding members of the Church:

"And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges there was peace also, save it were the pride which began to enter into the church—not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God—

"And they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren" (Helaman 3:33-34).

These abrupt changes in the condition of the people led Helaman to lament:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; . . . and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God" (Helaman 12:1-2).

### **Assess our own faith and obedience**

It is one thing to look back upon the events of history. It is another to regard our own time. We have the Lord's assurance that he will bless and

prosper his people if they will keep his commandments and remember to look to him as the source of their blessings.

On the other hand, we must not forget that these blessings are conditional. As King Limhi warned his people, "For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them" (Mosiah 7:29).

As bearers of the priesthood to whom the Lord has entrusted the leadership for his work, we must look carefully at our own lives. And we must assess honestly the level of faith and obedience of our people. Too many of the indicators are not encouraging. Only a small percentage of the Church members worldwide are tithe payers today. For many who live in conditions of material poverty, there may be no other way to escape their impoverishment than to give obedience to this law. As I visit among the stakes of the Church, I find it is not uncommon to discover that fewer than 50 percent of the households are contributing to the fast offerings of the Church, and the trends are not improving.

We have reached a point where more of our adult men are becoming prospective elders than are receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood. About half of the endowed members of the Church hold current temple recommends. Reports of other violations of the Lord's law are a source of concern.

These indicators may seem to carry a direful tone, but as Enos declared in the Book of Mormon, sometimes it is necessary to resort to "exceedingly great plainness of speech" (Enos 1:23).

As the world continues to ripen in iniquity, our lives of necessity must become increasingly different from the world and its standard. It will be a great challenge for us. We must be better than we have ever been before. As we succeed, we have the sure promise

of the Lord that he will prosper us in every way necessary for our well-being. That is my faith and my testimony. But it is a conditional promise. May we

qualify for its fulfillment in our lives and in our time is my earnest prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gary J. Coleman

### **Sure anchors and solid foundations**

My brothers in the gospel, I come before you this night to express the feelings of my heart. I want you young men to know that there are sure anchors for our life in these troubled times. There are rock-solid foundations upon which we can build to guide us through the devastating storms of the latter days. Today we can enjoy the fulness of the gospel with careful attention to basic principles and practices. Living these concepts will aid our joyful completion of the course that leads to eternal life.

### **Conversion**

While a young man, I walked paths of life that were different from those taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I lived by a mingling of the doctrines and commandments of men, having a form of godliness but with a lack of God-given truths and the power thereof. Religion was a vital part of my life as a youth. A religious home was at the core of our family life. Yet something was missing; something fundamental about the purpose of life was clouded and uncertain. While in my young adult years I was fortunate enough to become acquainted with kind Latter-day Saints who opened new gospel doors to me.

The doctrines of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ have become my path to eternal life and the fulness of joy here in mortality. Few things in life have become more dear to me than a knowledge of the reality of the Godhead. We are the literal spirit offspring

of God the Father. The life and mission of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, affects my life daily. The influence of the Holy Ghost from day to day is a great comfort.

I came into this Church because God has revealed Himself to latter-day prophets and they have testified of His reality. Upon asking God if the things of this gospel are true, I have received a witness more powerful than sight, more soul-assuring than words. The sweet witness by the power of the Holy Ghost that the truths of the restored gospel are upon the earth today has come to me.

### **Jesus is our only sure foundation**

It has been my profound blessing to become a convert to this Church and to know without a doubt of the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This resurrected, perfected being stands at the head of this Church. It is He upon whom we must build. It is He who is the chief cornerstone of our foundation. He is the rock of our salvation, the rock upon which not only the Church will be built, but our personal testimonies as well. No man, yea, no other name under heaven will suffice for our foundation. The prophet Helaman spoke of this sacred foundation most powerfully when he said:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon



you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless woe, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12).

Not only must we build upon the sure foundation of Jesus Christ, but the prophet Jacob identified Him as the "safe foundation"! This stone, he said, shall be "the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation" (Jacob 4:15-16).

I agree with all the conviction of my being that Jacob's testimony is true. When the Apostle Peter boldly declared of Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-17). Christ will be revealed to us through the same process that God used with Peter. Christ is always the rock upon which each of us must build, even the rock of revelation.

### **Latter-day prophets lead us**

I have come into this Church because latter-day prophets have been called by God to do His work. I remember the year, the month, the day, and even the very moment when my heart encompassed the testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. He did the work of a prophet, and he was an instrument in the hands of God to make His will known on this earth again.

God continues to raise up latter-day prophets, and I rejoice in the principle of continuous revelation for our day. I welcome the opportunity to sit at the feet of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—men whom we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. Of these men, the Lord himself has said in our day, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the

heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38).

As members of this Church we are, as the Apostle Paul testified, "No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

### **Blessings of the Restoration**

I rejoice exceedingly at the restoration of the books of scripture for our use and training today. Of course the Book of Mormon is true! It talks of Christ; it speaks of those who rejoice in Christ; it is full of preachings of Christ; it prophesies of Christ and testifies to us and our children as to the source of our remission of sins. Of course it is another testament of Jesus Christ! Of course God speaks to men in these latter days as He did in former days! It is a certainty that revelation is in constant operation in this Church!

The authority of God upon this earth resides in the authorized priesthood holders of this Church. Without question, therefore, all the ordinances of salvation and eternal life are in this Church. That which is bound by true priesthood authority on earth is also bound in heaven.

Yes, the Restoration has brought to earth again the true doctrines and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Restoration affects every fiber of our being. It consumes every part of our mortal journey. It keeps us focused on which path we should walk upon in our daily search for meaning to life. There truly is a strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life by following the Savior and the living prophets. *We must accept them as the inspired trainers for our race of life.*

## Press forward in Christ

"Wherefore," the prophet Nephi says, "ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

"And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 31:20-21).

Part of our mortal training is to walk by faith, repent of our sins, and call upon the Lord in daily prayer. We rejoice in the moments when promptings by the Holy Ghost are kindly given, and we are urged along the proper path of life. But each of us faces many difficult times here in mortality. All sorts of voices are screaming at us from the stadiums of public opinion. Our course will never be the popular way of the world. There are obstacles strewn in our path upon which we may sprain an ankle or stub a toe. But we must keep going. We move on in the strength of the Lord, each accountable for our own performance at the end of

our mortal race. We must be able to declare with Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

I am so grateful for my eternal companion and for the second generation of Latter-day Saints in our family who have also taken up the cause of Christ. May God help all of us to partake of the fulness of the restoration of this sacred gospel, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

We have heard Elders Dean L. Larsen and Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

We shall all stand now and sing two verses of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder John Baird Dickson, a new member of the Seventy.

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The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

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## Elder John B. Dickson

My dear brethren of the priesthood, it is sincerely a great pleasure to stand before you this evening and share with you the feelings and gratitude that I have to know that God lives and that he loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother and Savior, and that there is a prophet on the earth who can authoritatively say, "Thus saith the Lord." I treat with great reverence and humility the fact that the Lord has called me to serve as a Seventy and to witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ, and I will do

my very best to move the work ahead wherever I am assigned to labor.

I would like to speak to you about the importance of service in the kingdom of God and the importance of full-time missionary service in the lives of our young men and older couples.

## Faith to overcome bone cancer and serve a mission

Without appearing to be self-serving, I would like to tell you young men

of the Aaronic Priesthood a little about my call to a full-time mission. The year was 1962, and a call was received from President David O. McKay to serve in the Mexican Mission. Shortly after receiving the call, I learned that I had bone cancer in my right arm and that the probability of my living many weeks was extremely low. A blessing was received from a wonderful father, wherein he blessed me with my life and that the mission call would be fulfilled and that I would have a family and be able to serve the Lord all my days.

The doctor congratulated me on being one who had great faith in the Savior but assured me that I didn't realize the seriousness of what I had. As some of you have noticed, I have only one arm as a result of that problem; but ten months after having my arm amputated, I entered the Mexican Mission full of excitement and ready to work. You see, young men, I had several years earlier committed to the Lord that I would serve a full-time mission and that I would not let anything stop me from fulfilling that call. Well, brethren, the doctor passed away twenty years ago, always amazed to see me still breathing, and he actually became quite interested in the Church.

### **Blessings of having only one arm**

Brethren, I want you to know that having one arm for nearly thirty years has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. It hasn't been my greatest challenge, but it has been a great teacher to me, teaching me to be more patient and tolerant with others as I have had to learn to be more patient with myself. It has helped me to understand the necessity of our having challenges in life to help develop our character and stamina, helping us to become what the Lord ultimately wants us to become.

Our challenges may be physical, spiritual, economic, or emotional, but

if we will treat them as opportunities and stepping-stones in our progress, rather than barriers and stumbling blocks, our lives and growth will be wonderful. I have learned that between challenges it is very restful but that any real growth I have ever enjoyed has always come with a challenge.

### **"The Oyster"**

There's a little poem by an unknown author that we might think about when problems come our way. It is called "The Oyster."

There once was an oyster  
Whose story I'll tell,  
Who found that some sand  
Had worked under his shell.  
Just one little grain  
But it gave him a pain,  
For oysters have feelings  
That are very plain.  
Now did he berate  
This working of fate,  
That left him in such a  
Deplorable state?  
Did he curse the government,  
Call for an election,  
And say that the sea  
Should have some protection?  
No! He said to himself  
As he sat on the shelf,  
"Since I cannot remove it,  
I think I'll improve it."  
Well, years passed by,  
As years always do,  
Till he came to his destiny,  
Oyster stew!  
But the small grain of sand  
That bothered him so  
Was a beautiful pearl  
All richly aglow.  
Now this tale has a moral,  
For isn't it grand,  
What an oyster can do  
With a small grain of sand?  
And what couldn't we do  
If we'd only begin  
With all of the things  
That get under our skin?

## Commit to serve a mission

Young men, how are you going to meet the challenges that face you and that might jeopardize an opportunity to serve? It might be vocational opportunities, a car, a girlfriend, an assorted variety of sins, or a myriad of other reasons. For the older brethren it might be a yacht, camper, fishing plans, or maybe not wanting to miss some expected weddings and births. Whatever your individual challenges might be, I would invite you this very night to get on your knees and commit to your Heavenly Father that you will not allow anything to stop you from fulfilling that wonderful opportunity to serve a full-time mission. If you haven't been called, let your bishop know of your desire to serve.

When in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew the Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (25:40), he was talking about the importance of being of service to our fellowmen if we want to be worthy of his presence. What better way could there be to serve and to sacrifice than to accept a full-time mission call? At the same time, please realize that there are some handicaps and limitations that make other types of local service more practical than serving a full-time mission.

In the priesthood session of April conference, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "Now, my brethren, 'these are [your] days' (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 39). Yes, my young brethren, these are your days to be a part of 50,000, 75,000, and 100,000 missionaries serving in the army of the Lord, armed with peace, righteousness, and power.

## Life isn't intended to be easy

While presiding over the Mexico City North Mission in the late seventies, we decided to open the work in an area called the Huasteca, where there was only one Latter-day Saint family in a vast area with several communities and small cities. After two years there were five hundred members of the Church in five branches and an organized district. This was done by a handful of nineteen- and twenty-year-old faithful missionaries and two wonderful couples, who gave of themselves to see that others of Heavenly Father's children might know and understand.

After the missionaries had been in the Huasteca for about three weeks, we received a phone call from one of them, and we could tell that he was slightly discouraged, not having yet received any mail, being in a hot area with high humidity, and learning about a culture that was new to all of us. After we had talked for a minute or two, I reminded him that we had talked about the fact that it wouldn't be easy. He said, "Oh, that's right, President; that's right. It wouldn't be easy. I knew it wouldn't be easy." Well, he went ahead with great enthusiasm and concluded his very successful work there and was released to return home.

A couple of months later, while he was at BYU, he and some of his former companions called Sister Dickson and me at the mission home in Mexico City at 2:30 in the morning, waking us from a very sound sleep. After a short conversation, I mentioned the fact that it was wonderful to talk with them but that it seemed a little late at night to be calling. He said, "I know, President, but you knew it wouldn't be easy."

Brethren, life is not intended to be easy, but I promise those that labor faithfully in the service of their fellowmen, and with determination handle every challenge properly and under the

influence of the Spirit, that they will be blessed with feelings of happiness which will permeate their whole souls. And these, my brethren, are blessings that mold and build us and that can never be taken away.

I leave you with my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and my testimony of the blessings which accompany unself-

ish service and hard work that is done in his holy name, and I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

We have heard from Elder John Baird Dickson of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson will now speak to us.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

What a glorious sight is before me tonight! Here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, in the Assembly Hall, at the BYU Marriott Center, and gathered together in chapels scattered throughout the world is a mighty army of men—even the royal army of the Lord. We have been entrusted with the priesthood. We have been prepared for duty. We have been called to serve.

### **Samuel's response to the Lord's call**

The experience of the boy Samuel, as he responded to the Lord's call, has ever been an inspiration to me, as it has no doubt been to each holder of the priesthood. We remember that the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. One evening as the boy slept, the Lord called him by name: "Samuel." And he answered, "Here am I." Thinking that Eli had called him, Samuel ran to him and repeated the declaration, "Here am I." He was advised to return to his sleep.

Three times the voice of the Lord came to him, with the same response. Then the Lord called a fourth time, repeating the boy's name twice: "Samuel, Samuel."

The lad's answer, as before, is a classic example for you and me. He responded:

"Speak; for thy servant heareth.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which

both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (see 1 Samuel 3:1-11).

### **Young men, respond as Samuel**

Most of you young men will one day receive a call to serve a mission. How I pray that your response will be as was Samuel's: "Here am I. . . . Speak; for thy servant heareth." Then will heavenly help be yours. Every missionary strives to be the missionary his mother thinks he is, the missionary his father hopes he is—even the missionary the Lord knows he can become.

I remember a missionary recommendation for one young man on which the bishop had written: "This candidate is the finest I have ever recommended. He has served as an officer in the deacons, teachers, and priests quorums of which he has been a member. He excelled scholastically and athletically in high school. I know of no finer young man. P.S. I am proud to be his father." President Spencer W. Kimball, then chairman of the Missionary Committee, mused, "I hope his parents will be content with his assigned mission. I know of no opening for him this morning in the celestial kingdom."

### **The temple in South Africa**

Yes, sometimes expectations of those who love us are a bit beyond our capacity. Years ago, before a temple was completed in South Africa, the

Saints planning to visit a temple had to travel the long and costly route to London, England, or later to São Paulo, Brazil. When I visited South Africa, they, with all the strength of their hearts and souls, petitioned me to importune President Kimball to seek the heavenly inspiration to erect a temple in their country. I assured them this was a matter for the Lord and His prophet. They responded, "We have faith in you, Brother Monson. Please help us."

Upon returning to Salt Lake City, I discovered that a proposed temple for South Africa had already been approved and was to be announced immediately. When this occurred, I received a telegram from our members in South Africa. It read, "Thank you, Elder Monson. We knew you could do it!" You know, I believe I never did convince them that though I approved of the proposal, I did not bring it about.

### **Elder Jensen's decision to serve**

Every call to serve is a human drama in the life of the recipient. I am certain that such has been the case with each of the Brethren who earlier today were sustained as new General Authorities. Let me share with you some marvelous lessons from the life of one of these Brethren, Jay E. Jensen, as recently reported in the *Church News* ("Spiritual Foundation Set Early in Life," 8 Aug. 1992, pp. 6, 14).

Elder Jensen speaks of turning points in his life. His spiritual awakening began when he was a small boy growing up in Mapleton, Utah. His parents held family night long before it became a Church program. He recalled that his father read to him lessons from the Book of Mormon. His mother's deep love for books also had a favorable impact on her son. However, it was when he read for himself Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision that the witness of its truth became a reality.

Upon graduation from high school, young Jay and his sweetheart, Lona, decided to get married and not wait for a call to serve a mission. "It nearly broke my father's heart," Elder Jensen related. "Mother told me that Dad just wept."

Two weeks later, and before wedding plans were finalized, Jay and Lona attended a sacrament meeting where a returned missionary reported his mission. The Spirit touched their hearts. They concluded to postpone marriage. Jay arose, went to the bishop's office, and reported for missionary service. The rest is history. Jay served in the Spanish-American Mission.

Lona moved to California for employment and served a stake mission. Upon the completion of Jay's mission, they were married in the Manti Temple. Elder Jensen's father lived long enough to see his son serve an honorable mission and marry in the temple. Sister Jensen has often said that sending her husband-to-be on a mission was the hardest thing she ever did, but that it was the most rewarding. "I would never do it differently. We could never have been as happy otherwise."

Today, Jay and Lona serve in Guatemala. He is a member of the Central America Area Presidency.

Reflecting on these turning points in the lives of Jay and Lona Jensen, we recall the observation, "The door of history turns on small hinges," and so do people's lives.

### **Temple work for Confederate soldiers**

Fathers, grandfathers, are we reading to our sons and grandsons the word of the Lord? Returned missionaries, do your messages and your lives inspire others to stand up and serve? Brethren, are we sufficiently in tune with the Spirit that when the Lord calls, we can hear, as did Samuel, and declare, "Here am I"? Do we have the fortitude

and the faith, whatever our callings, to serve with unflinching courage and unshakable resolve? When we do, the Lord can work His mighty miracles through us.

One such miracle is taking place in the southern part of the United States in the area once referred to as the Confederacy. It pertains to family history and temple work. During the period between 1860 and 1865, this region literally became saturated with the blood of America's youth as soldiers by the hundreds of thousands perished. Even today, the earth here and there reveals a timeworn uniform button, a belt buckle, a spent bullet. But what of the men who fell while in the flower of their youth? Many had never married. Who was to do their temple work? Were they forever to be denied the blessings of eternal ordinances?

William D. Taylor, a Canadian with no ties to either side of the conflict that raged so long ago, found himself, together with wife and family, living in the old South and suddenly filled with a compelling interest in those who died while so young in years. An urgency came upon Brother Taylor to do something personally, a call to silent service.

In a letter to me dated July 20, 1992, Brother Taylor wrote: "It's been approximately one year since I last gave you an update on the extraction work that is being done for the Confederate soldiers (approximately four years since this project was started). The extraction has been progressing at a steady pace. As of this writing, we have sent for temple work just over 101,000 names. I am thankful for being allowed to do this work. It brings me joy unparalleled to anything I have ever known. It's hard to put my feelings into words. I exult when another regiment is prepared and ready to be sent to the temple, and my soul is pained when the information in the regimental history is insufficient for a soldier's work to be submitted."

A poet's words expressed Brother Taylor's feelings:

There I see them marching down the lane,  
One in blue and one in gray,  
Now arm and arm again,  
And there I see them rising toward the Son,  
Proud Rebels and proud Yankees,  
Silent journey just begun.  
[David Matthews, "Road to Gettysburg"]

Brethren, let me share with you a description of priesthood service pertaining to this work, as described by a priesthood leader. He wrote:

"On Saturday afternoon our Aaronic Priesthood young men and their leaders assembled at the temple to perform the baptismal work for the fallen soldiers. What a marvelous sight it was to see these young Aaronic Priesthood brethren being baptized by their own priesthood leaders. In almost every case, when the young brother had finished his fourteen or fifteen names, he would turn and embrace his leader and shed a few tears of joy. What an example of true priesthood love and service! I had the experience of being a witness at the font and gained firsthand knowledge of this and, in a few cases, the undeniable witness of the Spirit that those young soldiers who had died had accepted the baptisms that were being performed in their behalf by our Aaronic Priesthood brethren.

"We wrote down the name of each soldier who was baptized that glorious day so that the young men could have a brief history of the soldiers for whom they were baptized. I have no doubt that this experience will have a lifelong effect for good for all those who participated."

The statement of President Joseph F. Smith, in speaking of the redemption of the dead, provides a touching explanation of the joy felt by all who

participate in this and other similar endeavors:

"Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties."<sup>1</sup>

Brother William Taylor, I salute you for your leadership in bringing eternal blessings to your "troops," who must indeed call your name blessed.

### **Service to Hurricane Andrew victims**

When one holds the priesthood of God, he never knows when his moment of service may come. The challenge is to be ready to serve. On August 24, Hurricane Andrew slammed into the Florida coast south of Miami. Wind gusts exceeded two hundred miles per hour. It became the most costly disaster in United States history. Eighty-seven thousand homes were destroyed, leaving 150,000 homeless. Damages are estimated at 30 billion dollars. One hundred seventy-eight member homes were damaged, with forty-six of them destroyed.

A spearhead unit was deployed from the Church welfare facility in Atlanta before the storm hit, and it arrived at its appointed location just as the winds abated. The truck carried food, water, bedding, tools, and medical supplies—the first relief shipment to arrive in the disaster area.

Local priesthood and Relief Society leaders organized rapidly to assess injuries and damage and to assist in the cleanup effort. Three large waves of member volunteers, numbering over five thousand, labored shoulder to shoulder with disaster-stricken residents, helping to repair three thousand homes, a Jewish synagogue, a Pentecostal church, and two schools. Forty-

six missionaries from the Florida Fort Lauderdale Mission worked full time for more than two weeks unloading supply trucks, serving as interpreters, providing security and traffic control, and assisting with repairs.

Time will permit but a glance at several heartwarming accounts pertaining to this tremendous example of the priesthood in action.

1. One morning a call was received at the Kendall chapel. A lady explained that she understood the Church had a group of people who were going out to patch roofs and windows to keep the rains out. She was told that this was true, and she left her address. She was told that volunteers would be out soon to do whatever they could to assist. She then asked if she had to come and pay first and also whom should she pay. She was told that there would be no charge, at which she began to cry uncontrollably, finally managing to say, "I can only thank God for you people, for I have no means of paying anything."

2. Zack, a young man age nineteen who is now in the Missionary Training Center, accompanied a truckload of food, clothing, and other provisions sent by our members in central Georgia to help the victims of the hurricane. As Zack was leaving, his mother gave him some Cabbage Patch and other treasured dolls from her prized collection. Zack took particular pleasure in distributing those dolls to solemn-eyed little girls whose other toys were all destroyed.

3. A brother from Saint Anthony, Idaho, and other leaders in that area saw the terrible devastation suffered by the people of south Florida as the account appeared on television. They felt a compelling need to do something to help those who had been stricken. A decision was soon made to send an eighteen-wheeler filled with Idaho potatoes to Florida. The truck was loaded with boxes and sacks of potatoes and moved swiftly across the country to the site of the disaster.



The potatoes arrived in excellent condition. The missionaries unloaded the potatoes and soon divided them. It was amazing how welcome the potatoes were to the people of south Florida. They were so tired of eating fast foods that the potatoes were described as tasting almost like a dessert. In less than three days all of the potatoes were distributed to members and nonmembers alike. Hearts were tender and stomachs warmed by the kindness of those marvelous members in Idaho who had sent the potatoes.

4. Typical of the feelings experienced by those who put everything aside in their personal lives and rushed to the aid of their brothers and sisters are those expressed by a couple from Huntsville, Alabama. They wrote:

"[Our] second day [at the scene of the hurricane's devastation] was Sunday, but it seemed as crucial that we hurry with the work as it was for those who left the Salt Lake Valley on Sunday to rescue the handcart pioneers in dire straits. On the football and athletic fields of a high school that was our campground, each stake group held its own sacrament [and] testimony meeting before leaving for another day of work. We sang songs we knew. The sacrament was blessed and passed by priesthood holders in work clothes. We partook of the bread from frying pans and the water from picnic cups. The Spirit was still there. Due to a one-hour time limit for the meeting, not all who wanted could bear their [testimonies]. The closing song, 'I Am a Child of God,' reminded us we needed to push on to help His children."

5. One Spanish-speaking brother and his wife approached Elder Alexander Morrison, Area President for the North America Southeast Area, and said, "I have lost my life's savings. I have lost my home, my farm; all my avocados are destroyed. I have nothing." And then he smiled sweetly and

said, "But I have everything. I have the gospel of Jesus Christ."

God bless Elder Morrison, his counselors, and all fellow priesthood leaders; missionaries, both elders and sisters; and all the many thousands who have served so magnificently and unstintingly. Truly these responded as did Samuel: "Here am I."

The cleanup following Hurricane Andrew continues, as does the work of repair pertaining to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Iniki, which struck the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands.

### The priesthood in action

In these cataclysmic events and in the quiet challenges of individual lives, the priesthood is truly in action. Let us never despair, for this is the work of the Lord in which we are engaged. It has been said, "The Lord shapes the back to bear the burden placed upon it." The Master's counsel to all of us assembled tonight, to whom priesthood authority has been given and of whom priesthood service is expected, brings peace to the heart and comfort to the soul:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

To this divine truth I testify as I leave my witness with you that this work is true, that the priesthood does combine and present to our Heavenly Father a mighty army of righteousness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTE

1. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), pp. 469-70.

### President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 in the morning. Those desiring to attend this broadcast and the Sunday morning session which follows must be in their seats before 9:15.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules and use caution in your driving.

We express gratitude to this combined choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have sung.

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude by singing "How Great the Wisdom and the Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder Charles Didier, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, brethren, if you'll bear with me for a few minutes, I'd like to say a few words in conclusion. I know you've been here a long time, and some of you are restless. Be at peace. It won't last forever.

I'd like to say that it is always an inspiration to participate in these great priesthood gatherings. There are many conventions and conferences held across the world, but there is no other meeting comparable to this.

The miracle of satellite transmission has made it possible for hundreds of thousands of us to gather unitedly in hundreds of halls. Each of us is a distinct individual, but we are all of one mind, of one purpose, of one faith, each ordained to that priesthood and authority which come from God our Eternal Father.

There are many more of you in halls outside Salt Lake City than there are in the Tabernacle from which we speak tonight. Our voices and images reach you from this grand old building on Temple Square. I wish that all of you might be here in this unique and wonderful place.

### The Tabernacle: a unique building

This Tabernacle is certainly not the largest assembly hall in the world.

Six thousand can be seated here. There are now halls that seat ten times that number. But this one is different—different in its origin, different in its structure, different in its qualities.

I speak of it because this is its birthday. It was completed and first used for a gathering of the Saints 125 years ago in a similar October conference. Since then this has been the originating pulpit for the general conferences of the Church.

I wonder if, when Brigham Young first stood at this pulpit a century and a quarter ago, he ever thought this building would last so long or serve so well.

It is a peculiar building. I am not acquainted with any quite like it. It has a character, a spirit of its own. Those who sit beneath its great domed ceiling seem to sense this.

We recently hosted in this hall a convention of many officers of a part of the United States military forces. They were holding a conference here in Salt Lake City and wished to hear the Tabernacle Choir.

They came on a beautiful Sunday morning. I was asked to speak to them briefly, and I told them of this Tabernacle and its construction. The choir, accompanied by the 23rd Army Band, then presented a brief concert. As they concluded the concert, the choir sang

with mounting crescendo the "Battle Hymn of the Republic":

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the  
coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage  
where the grapes of wrath are  
stored. . . .  
His truth is marching on.  
[*Hymns*, no. 60]

I looked about the hall and saw seasoned veterans of war with tears running down their cheeks. For many it was a great, moving experience. This building has a spirit, a quality unique and wonderful.

### Building the Tabernacle

Four days after the 1847 arrival of the pioneers in this valley, Brigham Young touched his cane to the parched earth and said, "Here we will build a temple to our God." The ten acres on which the temple stands have come to be known as Temple Square. The first structure erected here was a bowery. It was a temporary, makeshift place of assembly. It consisted essentially of poles to support a flimsy roof of brush which afforded some shelter from the blistering sun. Then there was built just to the south of us what came to be known as the "Tabernacle" and later as the "Old Tabernacle." It was a structure with a gabled roof and walls that could provide a measure of comfort in both winter and summer.

But these people in this wilderness outpost were driven by a tremendous vision. They believed without a doubt that they were building the kingdom of God on earth. Their faith matched their vision. They determined to build a larger hall that would accommodate thousands.

The dimensions were established — 150 feet wide by 250 feet long. How could this be done in their circumstances? They had no steel with which to make girders. They had neither bolts

nor nails nor screws in any significant quantity. That was 1864, and the railroad would not arrive in this territory until five years later.

Bridges had been built in the East and here, using what was known as the Remington design. But to think of using this for a roof structure must have seemed preposterous to many. Nonetheless, the work went forward.

The location was determined — immediately west of the temple then under construction. The design as it was worked out called for forty-four sandstone buttresses, or pillars. They were erected in an oval configuration. They were anchored on substantial footings. With the addition of doors and skirting, these buttresses became the walls of the building.

Sandstone was brought from the mountains to the east, dressed and shaped to exact and rigid patterns. Limestone was likewise brought from the mountains and burned to be used for plaster and mortar. The great challenge was to create a roof resting on and sprung from these sandstone piers. Wooden scaffolding was erected. Great quantities of lumber were brought from the mountains and sawed into timbers. These were assembled in such a way as to form a great lattice work of triangles which would grow stronger under the stress of weight. Where the timbers crossed, holes were bored and wooden dowels inserted. The holes were tight, and as the dowels were driven in, a timber would split now and then. Strips of green rawhide were bound about the timber. The builders knew that when rawhide dries it shrinks, and the split would be tightened. The timber bridgework occupies nine feet of space between the ceiling and the roof covering. I suppose no one had seen anything like this before. It made possible this great hall without interior pillars to support the roof.

Skeptics, of which there are always many, said that when the interior scaffolding

folding was taken down, the roof would come with it.

But the scaffolding was removed and the roof remained intact. It has so remained now for 125 years. Engineers periodically check it. They marvel and find no deterioration or weakening.

### A symbol of faith

It was built in this remote area thirteen hundred miles from the frontier towns along the Mississippi and eight hundred miles from the settlements on the Pacific coast. To me it is a miracle building. I think of the skill of those who designed it and know that there must have been great inspiration behind that skill. I think of *faith* as I reflect on the time and circumstance of its construction. It is truly a tabernacle, built in the wilderness, from which the voice of the servants of the Lord should go forth to the world.

It is *the* Tabernacle. We so speak of it. It is the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, which has come to be known by millions upon millions across the world, who for more than sixty-three years have listened to broadcasts of the choir originating from this hall.

Though built of wood in the days of the poverty of our people, though designed and constructed without modern engineering and architectural expertise, it has stood and served for 125 years, a unique and wonderful house of worship and culture.

In imagination I can see Brigham Young standing here and looking up at the men putting together the timbers and saying, "Build it strong, boys. Build it strong!"

### Building our own tabernacles

Our bodies, my brethren, our minds are the tabernacles of our spirits. He who is the Father of those spirits would have us build strength and

virtue into these personal tabernacles. Only in such strength is there safety and growth and happiness. If there is one great ringing message I take from the builders of this structure, it is this: *Be strong!*

This is the same challenge spoken by prophets and leaders who walk the pages of our scriptures. For example, great was King David. Tremendous were his strengths. But there was a tragic weakness within him. He knew it, and when the days "drew nigh that he should die . . . he charged Solomon his son, saying,

"I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

"And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself" (1 Kings 2:1-3).

That is sound counsel for every man and boy who holds the priesthood of God.

### Be strong in self-discipline

*Be strong—be strong in the discipline of self.* How many otherwise good men squander their strength and dissipate their will and literally destroy their lives because they have not the power of self-discipline?

### Addictive power of pornography

Let me read to you from a letter I received from a man ashamed to sign his name. He writes:

"I am a 35-year-old male and am a convert to the Church of more than ten years. For most of my adult life I have been addicted to pornography. I am ashamed to admit this. My addiction is as real as that of an alcoholic or a drug addict.

"I was first introduced to this material as a child. I was molested by an older male cousin, and pornography was used to attract my interest. I am convinced that this exposure at an early age to sex and pornography is at the root of my addiction today. I think it is ironic that those who support the business of pornography say that it is a matter of freedom of expression. I have no freedom. I have lost my free agency because I have been unable to overcome this. It is a trap for me, and I can't seem to get out of it. Please, please, please, plead with the brethren of the Church to not only avoid but eliminate the sources of pornographic material in their lives. . . .

"Finally, President Hinckley, please pray for me and others in the Church who may be like me to have the courage and strength to overcome this terrible affliction."

Brethren, there is neither happiness nor peace to be gained from surrendering to the weakness of indulging in these things which degrade and destroy. When such material is on television, turn off the set. Stop being a boob in front of the tube. Avoid titillating videotapes as you would a foul disease. They are in the same category. Stay away from pornographic magazines and other destructive literature. There is too much of good to see; there is too much of wonderful reading to be experienced to waste time and destroy character and willpower in submitting to such destructive rot.

### **Be strong in standing for right**

*Be strong—in standing for the right.* We live in an age of compromise and acquiescence. In situations with which we are daily confronted, we know what is right, but under pressure from our peers and the beguiling voices of those who would persuade us, we capitulate. We compromise. We acquiesce. We give in, and we are ashamed of our-

selves. As men of the priesthood we must cultivate the strength to follow our convictions.

### **Columbus's faith and strength**

The entire world is celebrating this month the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, his biographer, says, "This night of October 11–12 [1492] was one big with destiny for the human race, the most momentous ever experienced aboard any ship in any sea" (*Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus* [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942], p. 223).

In my private commemoration of this event, I have read and reread one important and prophetic verse from the Book of Mormon and also a very long biography of Christopher Columbus.

That verse from Nephi's vision states, "And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land" (1 Nephi 13:12).

We interpret that to refer to Columbus. It is interesting to note that the Spirit of God wrought upon him. After reading that long biography, a Pulitzer winner of forty years ago, titled *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, I have no doubt that Christopher Columbus was a man of faith, as well as a man of indomitable determination.

I recognize that in this anniversary year a host of critics have spoken out against him. I do not dispute that there were others who came to this Western Hemisphere before him. But it was he who in faith lighted a lamp to look for a new way to China and who in the process discovered America. His was

an awesome undertaking—to sail west across the unknown seas farther than any before him of his generation. He it was who, in spite of the terror of the unknown and the complaints and near mutiny of his crew, sailed on with frequent prayers to the Almighty for guidance. In his reports to the sovereigns of Spain, Columbus repeatedly asserted that his voyage was for the glory of God and the spread of the Christian faith. Properly do we honor him for his unyielding strength in the face of uncertainty and danger.

### Be strong in the quality of mercy

*Be strong, my brethren, in the quality of mercy.* It is easy to be a bully in one's home, in one's business, in one's speech and acts. This sick world so cries out for kindness and love and mercy. These virtues become an expression of strength rather than weakness on the part of any holder of the priesthood of God. Be strong with that strength of which Isaiah spoke when he said:

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" (Isaiah 35:3-4).

"And in doing these things," says the Lord to each of us in modern revelation, "thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord.

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:4-5).

### Be strong in honesty

*Be strong, my brethren, with the strength of simple honesty.* How easy it is to "lie a little, take the advantage of

one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor" (2 Nephi 28:8).

Nephi so describes the people of his day, as he also describes so many of our day. How easy it is for us to say, "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent" (Articles of Faith 1:13). But how difficult for so many to resist the temptation to lie a little, cheat a little, steal a little, bear false witness in speaking gossipy words about others. Rise above it, brethren. Be strong in the simple virtue of honesty.

### Be strong in the faith

*Be strong—in the faith by which you walk and in the Church of which each of us is a member.* This is the work of God Almighty. It is the most precious of all causes. It needs your strength.

I give you these mighty and wonderful words of Paul written to the Ephesian Saints:

"Finally, my brethren," he says, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. . . .

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:10-12, 14-16).

I hope, my brethren, that perhaps this tremendous building in which we meet, now used for 125 years by the Latter-day Saints as our Tabernacle, will remind each of us of the strength we must nurture within ourselves while living in these mortal personal tabernacles, which are the gift and creation of God.

### Be strong in testimony

Brethren, *be strong in your testimony of Jesus Christ*, the Son of God. He is the chief cornerstone of this great work. Of His divinity and reality I bear solemn witness. He is the Lamb without blemish, who was offered for the sins of the world. Through His pain and because of His suffering I find reconciliation and eternal life. He is my

Teacher, my Exemplar, my Friend, and my Savior, whom I love and worship as the Redeemer of the world. In His holy name, amen.

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The choir sang "How Great the Wisdom and the Love."

Elder Charles Didier offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1992. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise Ye the Lord." President Monson then opened the meeting with the following remarks:

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 162nd semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson, who is watching the conference in his apartment, has asked me to conduct this session.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders L. Tom Perry, John H. Groberg, and Hans B. Ringger are seated on the stand.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners

and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We note that the conference is being relayed for the first time to satellite downlink locations in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, and Jamaica.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, will provide the music for this session. The choir opened these services by singing "Praise Ye the Lord" and will now sing "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee," following which Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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The choir sang "Oh, May My Soul Commune with Thee."

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Emergency in an airplane

A few weeks ago, while returning from a regional conference, we had an experience that remains vivid in my mind. As we approached the airport, the captain came on the public address system and spoke in crisp and authoritative tones: "We have an emergency! Please give me your attention. We have an emergency, and the cabin crew will give you instructions. For your own safety, please do what they ask you to do."

The crew sprang into action. This was the moment for which their training had prepared them. Every one of them knew precisely what to do. All utensils were quickly secured in locked containers.

Passengers were shifted to put strong men at each emergency exit.

We were told to remove our glasses, lower our heads, and firmly grasp our ankles.

A woman with a baby seated immediately behind me was crying. Others could be heard sobbing. Everyone knew that this was not just an exercise, but that it was for real and that it was serious.

A man emerged from the flight deck door. He recognized me and stooped down to say, "I am an off-duty pilot. The primary control system has failed, but I think we are going to be all right. They have managed to get the landing gear down and the flaps down."

Strangely, I felt no fear. In many years of flying, I have had experiences when I *have* known fear. But on this occasion I felt calm. I knew that a redundancy system had been built into the plane to handle just such an emergency and that the crew had been well trained.

I also knew that the effectiveness of that redundancy system would be known in a minute or two when the rubber hit the runway.

That moment came quickly. To the relief of everyone, the plane touched down smoothly, the landing gear held in place, the engines were reversed, and the aircraft was brought to a stop.

Fire engines were standing nearby. We were towed to the gate. The crew was appropriately applauded, and some of us expressed to the Lord our gratitude.

### The Lord's backup system

I have reflected on this experience in terms of the Church of which we are members. The head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His Church. But the earthly head is our prophet. Prophets are men who are endowed with a divine calling. Notwithstanding the divinity of that calling, they are human. They are subject to the problems of mortality.

We love and respect and honor and look to the prophet of this day, President Ezra Taft Benson. He has been a great and gifted leader, a man whose voice has rung out in testimony of this work across the world. He holds all the keys of the priesthood on the earth in this day. But he has reached an age where he cannot do many of the things he once did. This does not detract from his calling as a prophet. But it places limitations on his physical activities.

We have seen comparable situations in times past. President Wilford Woodruff grew old in office. So did Presidents Heber J. Grant, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, and, more recently, Spencer W. Kimball.

Some people, evidently not knowing the system, worry that because of the President's age, the Church faces a crisis. They seem not to realize that there is a backup system. In the very nature of this system, there is always on board a trained crew, if I may so speak of them. They have been thoroughly



schooled in Church procedures. More importantly, they also hold the keys of the eternal priesthood of God. They too have been put in place by the Lord.

I hope I will not sound presumptuous in reminding you of the unique and tremendous system of redundancy and backup which the Lord has structured into His kingdom so that without interruption it may go forward, meeting any emergency that might arise and handling every contingency with which it is faced. To me it is a wondrous and constantly renewing miracle.

### **Keys given to all Apostles**

Yesterday afternoon we sustained Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We next sustained his Counselors and then the members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. With fifteen men so described, endowed, and sustained, one not familiar with the Church might feel that there would be great confusion. But the Lord's kingdom is one of order. There is no confusion in its leadership.

When a man is ordained to the apostleship and set apart as a member of the Council of the Twelve, he is given the keys of the priesthood of God. Each of the fifteen living men so ordained holds these keys. However, only the President of the Church has the right to exercise them in their fullness. He may delegate the exercise of various of them to one or more of his Brethren. Each has the keys but is authorized to use them only to the degree granted him by the prophet of the Lord.

Such agency has been given by President Benson to his Counselors and to the Twelve according to various responsibilities delegated to them.

### **Authority of the First Presidency**

According to the revelation of the Lord, "of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:22).

This "Presidency of the High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church" (D&C 107:9).

Further pertaining to this principle, "it is according to the dignity of his office that he [the president] should preside over the council of the church; and it is his privilege to be assisted by two other presidents, appointed after the same manner that he himself was appointed.

"And in case of the absence of one or both of those who are appointed to assist him, he has power to preside over the council without an assistant; and in case he himself is absent, the other presidents have power to preside in his stead, both or either of them" (D&C 102:10-11).

### **Counselors in the First Presidency**

We who serve as Counselors recognize and know the parameters of our authority and our responsibility. Our only desire is to assist and help our leader with the tremendous burdens of his office. The Church is growing large, with more than eight million members now. It is moving across the world. Its program is extensive, complex, and deals with a host of elements. The responsibilities are many and varied.

But I can say that regardless of the circumstances, the work goes forward in an orderly and wonderful way. As it was during the time when President Kimball was ill, we have moved without hesitation when there is well-established policy. Where there is not firmly

established policy, we have talked with the President and received his approval before taking action. Let it never be said that there has been any disposition to assume authority or to do anything or say anything or teach anything which might be at variance with the wishes of him who has been put in his place by the Lord. We wish to be his loyal servants. We ask no honor for ourselves. We simply desire to do that which needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and according to policies on which the President has expressed himself.

### Duties and authority of the Twelve

Now, as I have indicated, there are twelve others on whom have been conferred the keys of the apostleship. They are, as the revelation describes them, "the twelve traveling councilors . . . called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

"And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned" (D&C 107:23–24).

You ask, can there be two separate bodies with equal authority without confusion? Yes. The Lord has given the answer to this. He has said, "The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:33).

Concerning this matter, President Joseph F. Smith said: "The duty of the Twelve Apostles of the Church is to preach the gospel to the world, to send it to the inhabitants of the earth and to bear testimony of Jesus Christ the Son of God, as living witnesses of his divine mission. That is their special calling and they are always under the direction of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when that presidency is intact, and there is

never at the same time two equal heads in the Church—never. The Lord never ordained any such thing, nor designed it. There is always a head in the Church, and if the Presidency of the Church are removed by death or other cause, then the next head of the Church is the Twelve Apostles, until a presidency is again organized of three presiding high priests who have the right to hold the office of First Presidency over the Church" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], pp. 177–78).

Here then, my brothers and sisters, is the remarkable plan of the Lord for the governance of His earthly kingdom. The authority to conduct its affairs was received in this dispensation under the hands of Peter, James, and John, who were ordained by the Lord when He was on the earth. And, as we have seen, there is order in the exercise of that authority.

### Called of God by prophecy

I wish now to say a few words about the men who are members of the Quorum of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I know all of those presently serving. I have known all who have filled these chairs in the last sixty years. I am confident that no one of them ever aspired to office. No one campaigned for it. I think none ever thought himself worthy of it. This is a singular and remarkable thing.

In the United States we presently are in a campaign to elect men and women to public office. Millions upon millions of dollars are being spent in the process, with hundreds of thousands working to promote the interests of their favorite candidates.

How different it is with the work of the Lord. No faithful member of this Church would think of applying for ecclesiastical office. Rather, "we believe that a man must be called of God,

by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof" (Articles of Faith 1:5).

The Lord Himself said of the Twelve whom He selected, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16).

I am confident that no man was ever called as a General Authority of this Church, certainly none I have known, who did not get on his knees, confessing his weaknesses and pleading with the Lord to safeguard him against temptation and any wrongdoing, and asking for the strength and the wisdom and the inspiration to perform well that which he is called upon to do.

### **Love and unity among Church leaders**

I feel that I know my Brethren. I know my leader, President Benson. I have knelt with him in prayer and heard his petitions. I know his heart, and I can testify of its goodness. I know his love, and I can testify of its reality. I know his prophetic pleading, and I can testify of its sincerity.

I know my associate in the Presidency, Thomas S. Monson. I know of his strength and desire to advance our Father's kingdom.

I know each of the Twelve in seniority, from President Howard W. Hunter to Elder Richard G. Scott.

These are my associates in this the work of the Almighty. As I said before, none sought this sacred office. Each was called and, in some instances, made serious sacrifice in accepting the call. We pray together. We meet in solemn assembly in the house of the Lord. Periodically we partake together the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and renew our covenants with Him who is our God, taking upon ourselves anew the name of the Lord, of whom we are called to testify.

As Brethren, we discuss various problems that come before us. Each man is different. We speak from various backgrounds and experiences. We discuss ways to improve and strengthen the work. At the outset of these discussions, there may be various points of view. But before the discussion is ended, there is total unanimity, else no action is taken. The Lord Himself has declared that such unity is an absolute necessity.

Is this a different kind of government? It is the government of the kingdom of God on the earth. It is unique in its organization. It is a system under which, if one man is unable to function, the work does not stumble or falter. To revert to my earlier illustration, there is a crew aboard with long, in-depth training. There is a system, a divinely mandated system, under which there is backup and redundancy to move the work and govern the Church in all the world, regardless of difficulties that may befall any of its leaders.

My Brethren of whom I have spoken are Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bear witness of their integrity. I bear witness of their faith. I bear witness of the voice of inspiration and revelation in their calls. Every one is a man of tested strength. But the greatest of these strengths lies in the acknowledgment that he must have divinely given direction and blessing if he is to perform acceptably.

### **We have only the Lord's agenda**

Now, in conclusion, do you believe this body of men would ever lead this Church astray? Remember whose church this is. It carries the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands as its head. His is the power to remove any who is found remiss in his duty or who is teaching that which is not in harmony with His divine will.

I say for each and all that we have no personal agenda. We have only the

Lord's agenda. There are those who criticize when we issue a statement of counsel or warning. Please know that our pleadings are not motivated by any selfish desire. Please know that our warnings are not without substance and reason. Please know that the decisions to speak out on various matters are not reached without deliberation, discussion, and prayer. Please know that our only ambition is to help each of you with your problems, your struggles, your families, your lives.

May I say, by way of personal testimony, that for more than a third of a century I have served as a General Authority of this Church. For twenty of those years I sat in the circle of the Council of the Twelve. For eleven-plus years I have served as a Counselor in the First Presidency. I know how the system works. I know that it is divine in its plan and in its authority. I know that there is no desire to teach anything other than what the Lord would have taught. He has said that "the decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity" (D&C 107:30). It is in this spirit that we seek to serve.

### **Receive teachings in faith**

He further said, concerning that which is taught by His servants, that "those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;

"But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation" (D&C 20:14-15).

When we plead with our people to observe the Sabbath day, to refrain from making it a day of merchandising, we are repeating only that which the Lord declared anciently and which He

has confirmed through modern revelation. When we decry gambling, we are reiterating only what has been said by prophets who have gone before. When we urge the strengthening of the foundations of our homes, we are doing only that which will bless the lives of our families. When we urge our people to live the law of tithing, we are repeating only that which the Lord spoke of anciently and confirmed anew in this dispensation for the blessing of His people. When we warn against pornography, immorality, drugs, and such, we are doing only that which prophets have always done.

### **Watchmen unto Israel**

Ours is the responsibility outlined by Ezekiel: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

We have no selfish desire in any of this, other than the wish that our brethren and sisters will be happy, that peace and love will be found in their homes, that they will be blessed by the power of the Almighty in their various undertakings in righteousness.

I thank all who with uplifted hands and generous hearts sustain us and uphold us in these responsibilities.

### **This work will never fail**

May the Almighty bless you, my beloved brethren and sisters. This is the work of God, our Eternal Father, who lives and rules in the universe. It is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, the Living Son of the Living God. It has been established upon the earth with divine authority, with a prophet and other leaders called through the voice of revelation and trained through long years of service. It will never fail. It will continue to succeed.

I make a promise to all who uphold and sustain it, and who strive with faith and prayer to live its principles, that they will be blessed with happiness and accomplishment in this life and joy and eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

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### President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### The rope swing

Some of the sweetest memories of my childhood center in the occasional summer and fall days spent with my brothers at Uncle Zene's farm in rural Virginia. There we hiked through woods with fragrant wildflowers. We marveled at flying squirrels, colorful birds, and even occasionally discovered a fox or pheasant. Meandering streams invited us to catch sunfish, and a cool, pure spring satisfied our thirst. There were roasted hot dogs, potato salad, sweet pickles, and of course hot apple pie with homemade ice cream. Every turn of the crank heightened our anticipation of that seldom-savored treat. But the most treasured experience was the rope swing Uncle Zene had hung in a tall tree near a beautiful brook. Its long gliding passes provided hours of pure joy. We would arch our backs and fling our legs and feet to see who could go the fastest and highest. It was sheer delight.

Once, to treat me to even more excitement, my brother Gerald put me on the wooden seat, then rotated the swing until the ropes were twisted in a double row of knots. With a mighty thrust he launched me into a spin of ever-increasing velocity. At first there was a feeling of exhilaration as I began

to pick up speed. That short-lived pleasure was quickly replaced by increasing feelings of dizziness, nausea, and just plain terror. When the horrible experience was over, I couldn't walk without falling, my head reeled, and I was certain my stomach would never again be the same.

Throughout it all, Gerald jumped with glee. When I finally fell out of the seat, he shouted, "Wasn't that terrific?"

My mind thought, "You're crazy," but my mouth said, "Yeah, that was great. Get in and I'll show you how much fun it is."

### Satisfying worldly appetites

I wonder if some of you are doing the same thing in your own life. Instead of enjoying the countless edifying experiences, precious wholesome relationships, and wondrous beauties of the earth the Lord has given for our happiness, do you pursue excitement beyond the bounds He has set? Do you seek transitory stimulation, even recognizing that it is always followed by powerful negative feelings? Do tantalizing emotions stimulate your appetite, creating an insatiable thirst for more? Does that thirst override the motiva-

tion to improve that should result from the negative harvest of transgression? Is your focus on satisfying appetite through increased participation, even though you begin to sense that inevitably it will bring very unpleasant consequences? Have you wondered how and when you will stop?

Even though you publicly defend strongly your actions, privately in moments of sober contemplation you may have recognized that you are in trouble. While outwardly you may blame others for your problems, inside you may have already discovered that indulgence in violation of trust and denial of truth leads to ever-diminishing options. One backs himself ever farther into a corner. Finally there seems to be no way out, and a sense of hopelessness sets in.

I have no interest but to help you. Will you listen? I may challenge some of your fixed ideas, but please listen for a few minutes.

### Use agency to obey truth

You may be tired of others trying to run your life—always telling you what to do. After all, you have the right to make your own choices. That is correct. You have that right. It is your agency. The secret to solving problems in your life will be found in understanding and using the eternally beneficial interaction of your agency and His truth.

The Master said:

“He that keepeth [the] commandments receiveth truth and light. . . .

“Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

*“And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men”* (D&C 93:28, 37, 39; italics added).

He also declared, “Every man may act in doctrine and principle, . . . according to the *moral agency* which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable . . . in the

day of judgment” (D&C 101:78; italics added).

These scriptures teach how to overcome the effects of wrong choices, whether they be lying, stealing, gambling, addiction to alcohol or drugs, immorality, inflicting abuse, or anything like it. Simply stated, one must use his *agency to obey truth*.

### Heavenly Father has defined truth

When others give you advice, have you ever said, “I just don’t believe the way you do. Those are your standards and your principles. I have my own”? Please understand that no one can change truth. Rationalization, overpowering self-interest, all of the arguments of men, anger, or self-will cannot change truth. Satan knows that, so he tries to create an atmosphere where one unwittingly begins to feel that he can not only choose what to do, but can determine what is right to do. Satan strives to persuade us to live outside truth by rationalizing our actions as *the right of choice*.

But our Eternal Father defined truth and established what is right and wrong before the creation of this earth. He also fixed the consequences of obedience and disobedience to those truths. He defended our right to choose our path in life so that we would grow, develop, and be happy, but *we do not have the right to choose the consequences of our acts*. Those who willfully, consistently disobey His commandments will inevitably learn that truth. Joseph Smith was inspired to record, “When we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

Please understand, no one has the privilege to choose what is right. God reserved that prerogative to Himself. Our agency does allow us to choose among alternate paths, but then we are bound to the consequence God has decreed. Later, if we don’t like where the

path takes us, the only out is through repentance.

Our Heavenly Father gave us truth, some as statements of cause and effect. We call them commandments. They guide our life to happiness. He knew that Satan would try to persuade some to live without fixed standards in life so that decisions would be based on current circumstances, what appears convenient, or what provides the greatest personal return. In this way, Satan removes the power of truth from one's life so he can take that soul captive.

### **Faith and obedience bring healing**

If you are trapped and there seems to be no way out, remember what Robert Frost taught: "The best way out is always through" ("A Servant to Servants," line 56). You must face the challenge and conquer it. The way through is based on faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments. It is the only way to permanently cure the damage to mind and spirit caused by unrighteous acts. It also provides healing, within the bounds of eternal law, to a body devastated by the effects of transgression.

It may be hard in your state of mind to understand that. Please believe me. He will help you when you do it His way. A prophet said, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is *far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?*" (Mosiah 5:13; italics added). Read and learn about the Savior until you know Him, then trust Him.

You may have found that change is hard. But know you *can* do it. You may wonder why you are not believed when you decide to change from a life of disobedience to one of integrity and compliance to truth. Recognize that it takes time to build a reputation that overcomes the effects of past deliberate decisions to deceive and to take advantage of others—but it is worth it.

Have you noticed that no matter how worthy your intent and how many procedures you follow precisely, if you make the tiniest mistake with a computer, it will not respond? All of your effort is futile. That is *not* the way the Lord works. There is nothing tricky about His commandments. He wants you to succeed. Where there is purity of heart and real intent, it is known to the Lord. Your obedience to truth and proper use of agency open the door to His divine help. At first, perhaps only you and He will believe your sincerity. But you will be rewarded by the joy that comes from positive personal progress. In time, others will recognize your consistent righteous acts and support you.

### **Accepting help from others**

Many people offer advice, but one's suggestions often directly contradict another's. How do you know whom to believe? Ask yourself these questions:

- What motivates the offer of help?
- Does your common sense confirm it is right? If so, it will be consistent with the teachings of the Savior.
- Has the advice offered been followed in the giver's life? Has it improved the quality of that life?

Honest evaluation of advice against these standards will help you decide whether it is motivated for your benefit or another's self-interest. A true friend is not one who always encourages you to do what you want to do, but one who helps you do what you know you ought to do.

You can block the corrective power of truth in your life by constantly letting others protect you from the consequences of your unworthy acts, without being smart enough to change your life. Your failure to properly respond to help will fix false concepts in your mind, and you will see no need to repent. Your negative patterns will be reinforced, not rejected.

How can one decide when to help you and when to let you grow from facing reality? The Lord has provided the answer. When you show genuine remorse, a contrite heart, a recognition of guilt, movement in the direction of improvement even though there may be slippage—when there is acceptance of responsibility for improper acts, support and help are needed and will be productive. Should you continue to manipulate, blame others for improper decisions, be deceitful and determined to continue the path of transgression by camouflage or cover-up, you are reinforcing false principles and have chosen to head for a showdown with tough reality.

### Begin healing now

It is one thing to know how to heal your damaged life. It is quite another to do it. You will change only when you recognize that it will bring lasting personal benefit. Deep down you know that breaking commandments does not bring anything productive and does cause a lot of grief for yourself and others. Don't wait to hit bottom. That is painful and could leave physical scars that can't be healed.

You can fool others who want to believe you, but you cannot deceive the Lord. Because of His justice, He will one day have to confront you with the consequences of your unrepented acts. No one wants that to happen. Some transgressions are so powerful that it is unlikely that you will begin to overcome them without another's help. Seek that help. In time, with the strength that comes from continued use of agency to live truth, you will be healed through the Savior. Please find someone you trust who is trustworthy, who understands agency and truth. You can begin anywhere—with a friend, a loved one, a competent professional, or a solid member. As you

gain confidence, see your bishop. He has priesthood keys that will help you. Begin now and don't stop until you understand and obey the teachings of the Savior and receive His healing power in your life. Otherwise, the cure will be incomplete.

This comment, used by permission of one someone else helped, shows how the Lord gives healing through a priesthood leader when he acts as an inspired instrument:

"I so appreciated your words of wisdom and kindness. I have felt such a strength from the Lord. My testimony is growing step by step each day.

"I still have heartache and pain, but now I realize that it is for my own good and that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The blessing you gave me under the direction of the Spirit truly changed me. I am finally able to have hope and know that I will work through this time. I am able to look forward to each new day."

### The Savior heals permanently

I testify that the Savior heals permanently. He said:

"Have ye any that . . . are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them. . . .

"For I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. . . .

"And he did heal them every one" (3 Nephi 17:7–9; italics added).

I testify that the Savior will heal you as you choose to obey truth and use your agency according to His counsel.

May the Lord soften your heart that you may know the things we have discussed are true. May he give you the courage and strength to begin to be healed *now*. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "A Psalm of Peace."

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### President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, followed by the choir singing "A Psalm of Peace."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "I Stand All Amazed," following which we shall

hear from Elder Marion D. Hanks, who was granted emeritus status yesterday after having served as a General Authority for thirty-nine years.

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The choir and congregation sang "I Stand All Amazed."

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## Elder Marion D. Hanks

Anyone who has been permitted to serve as we have is honored beyond personal merit. We know that and are grateful.

### Choose to love and obey the Lord

The Bible declares that God is the Father and the God of the spirits of all mankind (see Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9). The Apostle Paul taught the people at Athens that we are God's "offspring" and the Romans that "the Spirit . . . beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Acts 17:28-29; Romans 8:16-17).

Because of our Father's great love for his children and because of his commitment to freedom of choice for them, mankind has from the beginning enjoyed the opportunity to choose for themselves. John declares in the first few verses of his gospel that Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Scripture also records that "the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16; see also D&C 84:45-46). There is an accompanying significant scripture that explains why not every person walks by the light and why some do not choose good over evil: "The Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that *hearkeneth* to the voice of the Spirit" (D&C 84:46; italics added).

Our Heavenly Father desires that all mankind be led by the light, but that blessing will not be imposed upon anyone. Christ stands at the door and knocks; those who wish to have him enter and sup with them must hear his voice and "open the door" (Revelation 3:20). Thus two great principles on which the gospel is centered, love and agency, are plainly taught. Each of us is here to learn to love and give and hearken to the Spirit and choose to do the will of the Father. God wants his offspring and heirs to become all that we can be, to qualify for our inheritance. But we must choose; we are the decision makers, and he will not relieve that responsibility. As early as the book of Deuteronomy, it is written:

"I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; . . . therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and . . . obey his voice" (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20).

### Light shines through all the world

Through the light of the Lord, truth in some measure has reached many avenues and elements and levels of life. It has been a great satisfaction to me to find so much that is so good in so many places and from so many sources. President Joseph F. Smith spoke of the united members of the Godhead as the "fountain of truth" and said:

"From this fountain all the ancient learned philosophers have received

their inspiration and wisdom—from it they have received all their knowledge. If we find truth in broken fragments through the ages, it may be set down as an incontrovertible fact that it originated at the fountain, and was given to philosophers, inventors, patriots, reformers, and prophets by the inspiration of God” (“Fountain of Truth,” *Improvement Era*, June 1907, p. 629).

Earlier and subsequent leaders of the Church have similarly testified. In every field of activity in which I have been involved, I have had the privilege of association with people of character and quality who shared much of value with me. Consider this special example of the wisdom of a beloved Quaker teacher and writer, Rufus Jones, who said:

“Vital religion cannot be maintained and preserved on the theory that God dealt with our human race only in the far past ages, and that the Bible is the only evidence we have that our God is a living, revealing, communicating God. If God ever spoke, He is still speaking. He is the great I Am, not the great He Was” (*A Flash of Eternity*).

This is a significant expression of fundamental truth. Our own understanding of that principle is that God communicates with his children, and that he has revealed, does now reveal, and will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to his kingdom (see Articles of Faith 1:9).

### **Half Hallel's offered at Passover**

Jewish tradition helps us further appreciate the nature of our Heavenly Father in the tender practice of the Half Hallel's offered at Passover in celebration of the historic exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt and their passing through the Red Sea. When they reached the sea, the pursuing Egyptian armies overtook them. Through Moses, God divided the

waters, “and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground” (Exodus 14:22). The Egyptians went in after them. Then Moses stretched his hand again over the sea, and the waters returned. The Israelites were safe, and the Egyptian armies were drowning. Triumphantly the people began to sing hymns of praise to the Lord. But the Almighty stopped them and said, “How can you sing hymns of praise and jubilation when so many of my children are drowning in the sea?”

In remembrance of that event, Jewish people during the latter period of Passover include abridged or shortened psalms of praise, Half Hallel's, as part of the celebration.

Truly, light from the Source has shone through all the world. We rejoice in this and have a humble witness to bear: God *is* a living, revealing, communicating Father.

### **Fuller light through the Restoration**

When there are joined with the rich resources of ancient prophets and writers in the Bible the supporting and enhancing truths available in the scriptures of the Restoration, those welded treasures bring clarifying light and knowledge to the most important questions mankind has asked through the ages, and now asks, and in the future will continue to ask with increasing concern as populations and interpretations multiply. They deal with the truth about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit—the Godhead, about man himself, about mortal life and its meaning and purposes, and about eternity and its promises.

### **No immunity from afflictions**

A significant example of this fuller light is in response to the expanding catalog of concerns that face mankind—individuals, institutions,

countries, civilization. The Psalmist thousands of years ago cried, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble" (Psalm 31:9). He then spoke of problems, some of which sound strangely familiar to a modern ear. This very hour in our troubled world, calamity and destruction, fear, starvation, and conflict beleaguer the earth; afflictions and adversities burden many lives. Books multiply dealing with personal and family and societal troubles. Often they seem to agree that the right question to ask is not why good people have trials, but how shall good people respond when they are tried? The scriptures help us answer some important questions:

- Does God promise his children immunity from trouble and affliction?
- Is tribulation evidence of his displeasure?
- Did the prophets of old and Christ and his Apostles live without adversity?
- Did he promise his followers that they would be spared trouble?

Scripture responds. The Sermon on the Mount speaks to those who mourn, who are poor in spirit, who are reviled and persecuted, who have evil spoken against them falsely (see Matthew 5:3-4, 11).

The counsel is to turn the other cheek when smitten and to go the extra mile when forced. Mentioned are those who trespass, who are enemies, who curse and hate and spitefully use innocent others. The sun shines on the evil and the good; the rain falls on the just and the unjust (see Matthew 5:39-45).

To early leaders in the Church came the admonition, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many" (D&C 24:8).

God does not deny us the experience we came here to have. He does not insulate us from tribulation or guarantee immunity from trouble.

## **The Lord helps us in our afflictions**

Much of the pain we suffer and inevitably impose upon others is self-induced through our own bad judgment, through poor choices.

And for that, help is offered. To the penitent sinner comes the assurance that God will forgive, forget, and never mention our sins of which we have truly repented.

But much that happens to us in this life we cannot control; we only respond. Knowing what God has promised can provide the courage and faith we need. We are assured in the scriptures that we may know of a surety that the Lord does visit his people in their afflictions (see Mosiah 24:13-14), and that "whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 36:3).

Jesus said to those who mourned the loss of a loved one, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Said he to the lonely and the hopeless and those who are afraid, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Thus the promise is that in times of sorrow and affliction, if we endure and remain faithful and put our trust in him and are courageous, the Lord will visit us in our afflictions, strengthen us to carry our burdens, and support us in our trials. He'll be with us to the end of our days, lift us at the last day to greater opportunities for service, and exalt us at last with him and reunited loved ones, and he will consecrate our afflictions to our gain.

## **God weeps with us**

One of the experiences that has reached the deep center of my soul in

recent years was to hear a choice bishop share with others in a meeting the tender feelings of his heart concerning the loss of his wife to cancer, an experience many other husbands and wives and families well understand.

Twenty years earlier he had watched his mother pass through severe suffering before she died, and he had carried with him through the years a sense of resentment for the anguish she had endured. With his wife's ordeal, however, harsh as it was for her and in a measure for her family, his anger sublimated into a closer spiritual relationship with the Lord, and he was able more gracefully to share her burden.

Shortly before she died, his wife asked him to give her a blessing for relief from the intense pain. They both wept as he laid his hands on her head and talked with the Lord, "and," he said, "I felt the spiritual presence of our Father in Heaven. I had the strongest sensation that someone else was there weeping with us!" Near the end, severely physically debilitated, she said, "Never have I been more whole!"

They had felt the strong sensation that He was there, "weeping with us." Of course; why not? Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; he wept over Jerusalem's portending afflictions; and he wept when he came to the American continent and knelt with his people, and especially when "he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:21; see also 17:22; John 11:35; Luke 19:41).

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

This is an appropriate moment to thank Elder Hanks for his influence on my life in so many moments over so many years.

### Carry the Son's legacy of love

At home last evening after our meetings yesterday, we opened a note from a lovely Latter-day Saint mother, widowed by the death of her husband in an accident two years ago. She and her choice family have taken comfort, she said, from a framed statement on the wall of my office:

"To believe in God is to know that all the rules will be fair, and that there will be wonderful surprises."

I thank God for his love and the love of his Son. Those who have taken upon themselves the name of his Son as we have done must carry the burden of the legacy he left us—of love and mercy and service, accepting our heritage of hope and helpfulness, and joining our believing and our doing in working for the relief of the ills and the sufferings of humanity. God help us in honoring that commission, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth."

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### President Monson

Elder Marion D. Hanks has just spoken to us, lifting our spirits as he has done so many times before. We wish him well and love him. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Jehovah, Lord of Heaven and Earth."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

### To those whose discipleship is casual

Eighteen years ago from this same pulpit, I pled with those who stood indecisively on the "porch" of the Church

to come fully inside (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, pp. 14–16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, pp. 12–13). Today my plea is to those members already inside but whose discipleship is casual, individuals whom we love, whose gifts and talents are much needed in building the kingdom!

Any call for greater consecration is, of course, really a call to all of us. But these remarks are not primarily for those who are steadily striving and who genuinely seek to keep God's commandments and yet sometimes fall short (see D&C 46:9). Nor is this primarily for those few in deliberate noncompliance, including some who cast off on intellectual and behavioral bungee cords in search of new sensations, only to be jerked about by the old heresies and the old sins.

Instead, these comments are for the essentially "honorable" members who are skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than "anxiously engaged" (D&C 76:75; 58:27). Though nominal in their participation, their reservations and hesitations inevitably show through. They may even pass through our holy temples, but, alas, they do not let the holy temples pass through them.

### Characteristics of casual disciples

Such members accept callings but not all of the accompanying responsibilities; hence, their Church chores must often be done by those already "anxiously engaged." Some regard themselves as merely "resting" in between Church callings. But we are never in between as to this soaring call from Jesus: "What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27; see also Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48). It is never safe to rest regarding that calling! In fact, being "valiant" in one's testimony of Jesus includes striving to

become more like Him in mind, heart, and attributes (D&C 76:79). Becoming this manner of men and women is the ultimate expression of orthodoxy!

All are free to choose, of course, and we would not have it otherwise. Unfortunately, however, when some choose slackness, they are choosing not only for themselves, but for the next generation and the next. Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children! Earlier generations in a family may have reflected dedication, while some in the current generation evidence equivocation. Sadly, in the next, some may choose dissension as erosion takes its toll.

While casual members are not unrighteous, they often avoid appearing to be too righteous by seeming less committed than they really are—an ironic form of hypocrisy.

Some of these otherwise honorable members mistakenly regard the Church as an institution, but not as a kingdom. They know the doctrines of the kingdom, but more as a matter of recitation than of real comprehension.

Casual members are usually very busy with the cares and the things of the world—much as honorable Amulek once was. Called many times, he would not hear. He really knew concerning the truths of the gospel, but Amulek would not acknowledge that he knew (see Alma 10:4–6).

One common characteristic of the honorable but slack is their disdain for the seemingly unexciting duties of discipleship, such as daily prayer, regular reading of the scriptures, attendance at sacrament meeting, paying a full tithe, and participating in the holy temples. Such disdain is especially dangerous in today's world of raging relativism and of belching sensualism, a world in which, if many utter the name of Deity at all, it is only as verbal punctuation or as an expression of exclamation, not adoration!

### Striving for greater consecration

In contrast, those sincerely striving for greater consecration neither cast off their commitments nor the holy garment. They avoid obscenity, keep the law of chastity, pay their tithes, and love and serve their spouses and children. As good neighbors, they "bear one another's burdens," "mourn with those that mourn," "comfort those . . . in need of comfort," and valiantly "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

When the determination is first made to begin to be more spiritually settled, there is an initial vulnerability; it is hard to break with the past. But once we begin, we see how friends who would hold us back spiritually are not true friends at all. Any chiding from them reflects either resentment or unconscious worry that somehow they are being deserted. In any attempt to explain to them, our tongue is able to speak only "the smallest part" (Alma 26:16). We continue to care for them, but we care for our duty to God more. Brigham Young counseled candidly: "Some do not understand duties which do not coincide with their natural feelings and affections. . . . There are duties which are above affection" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:65).

### Consecrate all, not a portion

Likewise it is only fair to warn that any determination to seek greater consecration will soon expose what we yet lack, a painful but necessary thing. Remember the rich, righteous young man who was told by Jesus, "One thing thou lackest?" (Mark 10:21). Ananias and Sapphira, otherwise good members of the Church, "kept back" a portion instead of consecrating their all (see Acts 5:1-11). Some would never sell Jesus for thirty pieces, but they would not give Him their all either!

Unfortunately, we tend to think of consecration only in terms of property and money. But there are so many ways of keeping back part. One might be giving of money and time and yet hold back a significant portion of himself. One might share talents publicly yet privately retain a particular pride. One might hold back from kneeling before God's throne and yet bow to a particular gallery of peers. One might accept a Church calling but have his heart more set on maintaining a certain role in the world.

Still others find it easier to bend their knees than their minds. Exciting exploration is preferred to plodding implementation; speculation seems more fun than consecration, and so does trying to soften the hard doctrines instead of submitting to them. Worse still, by not obeying, these few members lack real knowing (see John 7:17). Lacking real knowing, they cannot defend their faith and may become critics instead of defenders!

A few of the latter end up in the self-reinforcing and self-congratulating Hyde Park corner of the Church, which they provincially mistake for the whole of the Church, as if London's real Hyde Park corner were Parliament, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace, and all of England combined!

### Consecration may bring challenges

Only greater consecration will cure ambivalence and casualness in any of us! As already noted, the tutoring challenges arising from increased consecration may be severe but may reflect the divine mercy necessary to induce further consecration (see Helaman 12:3). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. Deprivation may prepare us for further consecration, though we shudder at the thought. If we are too easily contented, God may administer a dose of divine discontent. His long-suffering thus becomes very

necessary to maximize our agency and development. But He is not an indulgent Father.

We "cannot bear all things now," but the Lord "will lead [us] along," as we "give place" in our thoughts and schedules and "give away" our sins, which are the only ways we can begin to make room to receive all that God can give us (D&C 78:18; 50:4; Alma 32:27, 28; 22:18).

Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus!

### Consecration requires surrender

Consecration is the only surrender which is also a victory. It brings release from the raucous, overpopulated cell block of selfishness and emancipation from the dark prison of pride. Yet instead of striving for greater consecration, it is so easy to go on performing casually in halfhearted compliance as if hoping to "ride to paradise on a golf cart" (Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979], p. 125).

But is being consecrated and "swallowed up" a threat to our individuality? (see Mosiah 15:7). No! Heavenly Father is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new and the real self. It is not a question of losing our identity but of finding our true identity!

When at last we are truly pointed homeward, then the world's pointing fingers of scorn can better be endured. As we come to know to Whom we belong, the other forms of belonging cease to mean very much. Likewise, as Jesus begins to have a real place in our lives, we are much less concerned with losing our places in the world. When our minds really catch hold of the significance of Jesus' atonement, the world's hold on us loosens (see Alma 36:18-19).

Increased consecration is not so much a demand for more hours of

Church work as it is for more awareness of Whose work this really is! For now, consecration may not require giving up worldly possessions so much as being less possessed by them.

### Obedience is emancipating

Only when things begin to come into focus "with an eye single" do we see "things as they really are"! (Jacob 4:13). What a view awaits! Only to the degree that we respond to life's temptations as Jesus did, who "gave no heed unto them," will we be "free"—free at last! (D&C 20:22; John 8:32).

True orthodoxy thus brings safety and felicity! It is not only correctness but happiness. Strange, isn't it, even the very word *orthodoxy* has fallen into disfavor with some? As society gets more and more flaky, a few rush forward to warn shrilly against orthodoxy!

Remember how, with Pharaoh's angry army in hot pursuit, ancient Israel aligned themselves with the Lord's instructions? Moses stretched forth his hand and the Red Sea parted. With towering walls of water on each side, Israel walked through the narrow passage obediently, and no doubt quickly! There were no warnings about conforming on that day!

There are passages ahead which will require similar obedience, as prophets lead the "men [and women] of Christ" in a straight and narrow course (see Helaman 3:29).

Becoming more like Jesus in thought and behavior is not grinding and repressing, but emancipating and discovering! Unorthodoxy in behavior and intellect is just the opposite. A little pornography may not only lead to child and spouse abuse, but it slowly sucks out the marrow of self-esteem. A little tendency to gossip can lead not only to bearing serious false witness, but more often to malicious whispers which, unfortunately, "memory will warehouse as a shout" (C. S. Lewis,

*The Quotable Lewis*, ed. Owen Barfield and Jerry Root [Wheaton, Ill.: Tindale Publications, 1989], p. 425). A little criticism of the Brethren, which seems harmless enough, may not only damage other members but can even lead to one's setting himself up as a substitute "light unto the world" (2 Nephi 26:29). Yes, happily, some such prodigals do come back, but they usually walk alone, unaccompanied by those they once led astray!

### **"Settle this in your hearts"**

Jesus counseled His disciples, "Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you" (JST, Luke 14:28). Getting thus settled precedes consecration. The Prophet Joseph Smith said gospel knowledge "does away with darkness, suspense and doubt" and that "there is no pain so awful as that of suspense" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 288). Being settled keeps us from responding to every little ripple of dissent as if it were a tidal wave. We are to be disciples, not oscillators, like a "reed shaken with the wind" (Matthew 11:7). More members need the immense relief and peace which can come from being "settled," without which those individuals will be like "the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isaiah 57:20).

There is another special reason to become settled: we will live in a time in which "all things shall be in commotion" (D&C 88:91; 45:26). The uncertainties, upheavals, and topsy-turviness of today's world will be such that those who vacillate and equivocate will be tossed about by severe turbulence.

### **Press forward as Jesus did**

Finally, if we shrink from deeper consecration, then we are not worthy of Him who, for our sake, refused to "shrink" in the midst of His deepening agony during the Atonement! (D&C 19:18). Instead, Jesus pressed forward, giving His all and completing His marvelous "preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19).

Consider, what if Jesus' Mortal Messiahship had consisted only of remarkable sermons? Or was further enhanced with healings and other miracles—but without Gethsemane's and Calvary's awful but consecrated hours of the Atonement? How then would we regard Jesus' ministry? Where would mankind be?

Brothers and sisters, whatever we embrace instead of Jesus and His work will keep us from qualifying to enter His kingdom and therefore from being embraced by Him (see Mormon 6:17).

May we get settled and prepare now for that marvelous moment then, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!

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The choir sang "More Things Are Wrought by Prayer."

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### **President Monson**

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Twelve, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "More Things Are Wrought by Prayer."

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will conclude this session by singing "We Have Partaken of Thy Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder Douglas H. Smith, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy.

This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.



## President Thomas S. Monson

### Reading of the Savior's miracles

Almost forty years ago I received an invitation to meet with President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, a statesman of towering stature, and a scholar of international renown. My profession then was in the field of printing and publishing. President Clark made me welcome in his office and then produced from his old rolltop desk a large sheaf of handwritten notes, many of them made when he was a law student long years before. He proceeded to outline for me his goal of producing a harmony of the Gospels. This goal was achieved with his monumental work *Our Lord of the Gospels*.

Recently I took down from my library shelf a personally inscribed, leather-bound copy of this classic treatment of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. As I perused the many pages, I paused at the section entitled "The Miracles of Jesus." I remembered as though it were yesterday President Clark asking me to read to him several of these accounts while he sat back in his large leather chair and listened. This was a day in my life never to be forgotten.

President Clark asked me to read aloud the account found in Luke concerning the man filled with leprosy. I proceeded to read:

"And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

"And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him" (Luke 5:12-13).

He asked that I continue reading from Luke concerning the man afflicted with palsy and the enterprising manner in which he was presented for the attention of the Lord:

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

"And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:18-20).

There followed snide comments from the Pharisees concerning who had the right to forgive sins. Jesus silenced their bickering by saying:

"Whether [it] is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

"And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God" (Luke 5:23-25).

President Clark removed from his pocket a handkerchief and wiped the tears from his eyes. He commented, "As we grow older, tears come more frequently." After a few words of good-bye, I departed from his office, leaving him alone with his thoughts and his tears.

### Bearing tragedy and adversity

As I reflect on this experience, my heart fills with gratitude to the Lord for His divine intervention to relieve the suffering, heal the sick, and raise the dead. I grieve, however, for the many, similarly afflicted, who knew not how to find the Master, to learn of His teachings, and to become the beneficiaries of His power. I remember that President Clark himself suffered

heartache and pain in the tragic death at Pearl Harbor of his son-in-law, Mervyn S. Bennion, captain of the battleship *West Virginia*. That day there had been no ram in the thicket, no steel to stop the shrapnel, no miracle to heal the wounds of war. But faith never wavered, and answered prayers provided the courage to carry on.

So it is today. In our lives, sickness comes to loved ones, accidents leave their cruel marks of remembrance, and tiny legs that once ran are imprisoned in a wheelchair.

Mothers and fathers who anxiously await the arrival of a precious child sometimes learn that all is not well with this tiny infant. A missing limb, sightless eyes, a damaged brain, or the term "Down's syndrome" greets the parents, leaving them baffled, filled with sorrow, and reaching out for hope.

There follows the inevitable blaming of oneself, the condemnation of a careless action, and the perennial questions: Why such a tragedy in our family? Why didn't I keep her home? If only he hadn't gone to that party. How did this happen? Where was God? Where was a protecting angel? *If, why, where, how*—those recurring words do not bring back the lost son, the perfect body, the plans of parents, or the dreams of youth. Self-pity, personal withdrawal, or deep despair will not bring the peace, the assurance, or help which are needed. Rather, we must go forward, look upward, move onward, and rise heavenward.

It is imperative that we recognize that whatever has happened to us has happened to others. They have coped, and so must we. We are not alone. Heavenly Father's help is near.

### **Job's faith and courage**

Perhaps no other has been so afflicted as the man Job, who was described as "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed

evil" (Job 1:1). He prospered by every measurement. In other words, he had it all made. Then came the loss of literally everything: his wealth, his family, his health. At one time the suggestion was made that he "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). Job's summation of his faith, after ordeals demanded of few others, is a testimony of truth, a proclamation of courage, and a declaration of trust:

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

"That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:23-27).

Let me share with you a brief look into the lives of others, to learn that after the tears of a day of despair, a night of sorrow, "joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

### **Eve Gail McDaniel's accomplishment**

Just two years ago, Eve Gail McDaniel and her parents, Bishop and Sister Jerry Lee McDaniel of the Reedsport Oregon Ward, came to my office and presented as a contribution to the Church Historical Department a copy of the Book of Mormon which Eve had written, by hand, and placed in three large binders. Eve, then twenty-eight, was born September 18, 1962. A case of meningitis when she was a baby resulted in brain damage. She cannot read, but she copied the entire Book of Mormon, letter by letter, over a period of about eighteen months. In doing so, she learned to recognize certain words and phrases, such as *commandments* and *nevertheless*. Her favorite—and she glowed as

she repeated the phrase—was “And it came to pass.” Eve reflected the joy of accomplishment, even the smile of success. Her parents rejoiced in her gladness of heart and buoyancy of spirit. Heaven was very near.

### **Angelic handicapped children**

On another occasion, near the Christmas season, I had the opportunity to meet in the Church Office Building with a group of handicapped children. There were about sixty in the group. My heart literally melted as I met with them. They sang for me “I Am a Child of God,” “Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer,” and “As I Have Loved You, Love One Another.” There was such an angelic expression on their faces and such a simple trust expressed in their comments that I felt I was on sacred ground. They presented to me a beautiful booklet in which each one had prepared a special page illustrating those blessings for which he or she was most thankful at Christmastime. I commend the many teachers and families who work behind the scenes in bringing a measure of comfort, purpose, and joy to these special children. They brightened my entire day.

### **The Shumways rise above adversity**

Several years ago, Brigham Young University honored with a presidential citation Sarah Bagley Shumway, a truly remarkable woman of our time. The citation contained the words: “It is often within our homes and among our own family members that the eternally significant—but usually unheralded—dramas of daily living occur. The people in these plain but important places bring stability to the present and promise to the future. Their lives are filled with struggle and deep feeling as they face circumstances that rarely fit neatly within the formulae of plays, films and newscasts. But their victories,

however slight, strengthen the boundaries through which the history of future generations must pass.”

Sarah married H. Smith Shumway, then her “friend and sweetheart of nine years,” in 1948. The courtship was longer than most because Smith, an infantry officer in World War II, was blinded and severely wounded by a land-mine explosion in the advance on Paris, France. During his long rehabilitation, Sarah learned braille so that she could correspond with him in privacy. She couldn’t tolerate the idea of others reading her letters aloud to the man she loved.

Something of the spirit of this young couple comes to us in the simple candor of Smith Shumway’s proposal of marriage. Finally home in Wyoming after the war, he told Sarah, “If you will drive the car and sort the socks and read the mail, I will do the rest.” She accepted the offer.

Years of study led to a successful career, eight accomplished children, a host of grandchildren, and lives of service. The Shumways, along life’s pathway, have faced problems of a child with severe deafness, a missionary son developing cancer, and a twin granddaughter injured at birth.

My family and I had the privilege to meet the entire Shumway clan at Aspen Grove a year ago. It was our joy to be with them. Each wore an identifying T-shirt on which was a map depicting the location of each child and family, along with the names of all. Brother Shumway, with justifiable pride, pointed to the location on his shirt of his precious ones and beamed the smile of gladness. Only then did I ponder that he had never seen any of his children or grandchildren. Or had he? While his eyes had never beheld them, in his heart he knew them and he loved them.

At an evening of entertainment, the Shumway family was on the stage at Aspen Grove. The children were asked, “What was it like growing up in a

household with a sightless father?" One daughter smiled and said, "When we were little, occasionally we felt Daddy should not have too much dessert at dinner, so without telling him, we would trade our smaller helping with his larger one. Maybe he knew, but he never complained."

One child touched our hearts when she recounted, "When I was about five years old, I remember my father holding my hand and walking me around the neighborhood, and I never realized he was blind because he talked about the birds and other things. I always thought he held my hand because he loved me more than other fathers loved their children."

Today Brother Shumway is a patriarch. Who would you guess learned typing skills so as to be able to type the many blessings he gives? You're correct: his beloved wife, Sarah.

Smith and Sarah Shumway and their family are examples of rising above adversity and sorrow, overcoming the tragedy of war-inflicted impairment, and walking bravely the higher roadway of life.

### **The smile that shines through tears**

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the poetess, wrote:

It is easy enough to be pleasant,  
When life flows by like a song,  
But the man worth while is one who  
will smile,  
When everything goes dead wrong.  
For the test of the heart is trouble,  
And it always comes with the years,  
And the smile that is worth the  
praises of earth  
Is the smile that shines through tears.  
["Worth While"]

### **Melissa Engle's triumph and miracle**

May I conclude with the inspiring example of Melissa Engle of West

Valley, Utah. Melissa is featured in the August 1992 issue of the *New Era*. She tells her own story:

"When I was born I only had a thumb on my right hand because the umbilical cord got wrapped around my fingers and [severed them]. My dad wanted to find something I could do to strengthen my hand and make it useful. Playing the violin seemed like a natural because I wouldn't have to finger with both hands, like you would with a flute. . . .

"I've been playing for about eight years now. I take private lessons, and I have to work at things like a paper route to help pay for them. I get to [my violin] lessons by riding a bus across town. . . .

"A highlight [of my life] was Interlochen, located on a lake in Michigan, one of the best music camps in the world for [youth]. I sent in my application for the eight weeks of intensive music training and couldn't believe I [was] accepted.

"The only problem was money. It costs thousands of dollars, and there was no way [I could] make that much before the deadline. So I prayed and prayed, and about a week before I had to send in the money, I was called into the office of a man who had a grant for someone with a handicap who was pursuing the arts. That, to me, was a miracle. . . . I'm really grateful for it" ("Something You Really Love," *New Era*, Aug. 1992, pp. 30-31).

Melissa, when she received the grant, turned to her mother, who had been anxious not to see her daughter disappointed and had thus attempted to curb her enthusiasm and hope, and said, "Mother, I told you Heavenly Father answers prayers, for look how He has answered mine."

He that notes a sparrow's fall had fulfilled a child's dream, answered a child's prayer.

### God's promises to those who suffer

To all who have suffered silently from sickness, to you who have cared for those with physical or mental impairment, who have borne a heavy burden day by day, year by year, and to you noble mothers and dedicated fathers—I salute you and pray God's blessings to ever attend you. To the children, particularly those who cannot run and play and frolic, come the reassuring words: "Dearest children, God is near you, Watching o'er you day and night" (*Hymns*, no. 96).

There will surely come that day, even the fulfillment of the precious promise from the Book of Mormon:

"The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. . . .

"And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God" (Alma 40:23, 25).

From the Psalm echoes the assurance:

"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. . . .

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:2-4).

### Count your blessings

Through the years the Latter-day Saints have taken comfort from the favorite hymn remembered from our youth:

When upon life's billows you are  
tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking  
all is lost,  
Count your many blessings; name  
them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the  
Lord has done. . . .

Are you ever burdened with a load  
of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are  
called to bear?

Count your many blessings; ev'ry  
doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days  
go by. . . .

So amid the conflict, whether great  
or small,

Do not be discouraged; God is over  
all.

Count your many blessings; angels  
will attend,

Help and comfort give you to your  
journey's end.

[*Hymns*, no. 241]

To any who from anguish of heart and sadness of soul have silently asked, "Heavenly Father, are you really there? . . . Do you hear and answer every . . . prayer?" (*Children's Songbook*, p. 12), I bear to you my witness that He is there. He does hear and answer every prayer. His Son, the Christ, burst the bands of our earthly prisons. Heaven's blessings await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang "We Have Partaken of Thy Love."

Elder Douglas H. Smith offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, Octo-

ber 4, 1992. President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Richard L. Elliott at the organ.

President Hinckley made the following remarks as the meeting began:

#### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 162nd Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Ezra Taft Benson is watching this session in his apartment. We send our love to him.

To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Richard G. Scott, Jacob de Jager, and Jack H. Goasland are seated on the stand.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by

Richard Elliott, will provide the music for this session.

We shall open with the choir singing "High on the Mountain Top." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Glen L. Rudd, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Glen L. Rudd offered the invocation.

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#### **President Hinckley**

The choir will now sing "He, Watching over Israel," and Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "He, Watching over Israel."

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### **Elder Boyd K. Packer**

#### **Seek learning by study and by faith**

I am grateful for the power of the choir, the power of music to introduce a spirit of reverence and worship.

We are counseled to "seek . . . diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

The words *study* and *faith* each portray a type of education. First, we are commanded to "teach one another the *doctrine* of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in

doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God" (D&C 88:77-78; *italics added*).

And we are also "to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion" (D&C 93:53; see also 88:79).

The Church must concentrate on moral and spiritual education; we may encourage secular education but not necessarily provide it.

#### **The spirit of gathering**

There is much said in the scriptures about the gathering of the Saints.

In the early days the call went out to converts all over the world to gather to Zion. And they came, first as a trickle and then as a stream. The Zion to which they came was under terrible persecution and was greatly strengthened by their very numbers.

Because there were no public schools, the Church opened schools. Even in our own generation, schools have been established where there were none.

Something of the spirit of gathering touched our schools. I can remember, as supervisor of seminaries, attending stake conferences with the General Authorities to recruit students for our Church schools.

In an area conference held in Mexico City in 1972, Bruce R. McConkie said:

"[The] revealed words speak of . . . there being congregations of . . . covenant people of the Lord *in every nation, speaking every tongue, and among every people* when the Lord comes again. . . .

"The place of gathering for the Mexican Saints is in Mexico; the place of gathering for the Guatemalan Saints is in Guatemala; the place of gathering for the Brazilian Saints is in Brazil; and so it goes throughout the length and breadth of the whole earth. . . . Every nation is the gathering place for its own people" (in Conference Report, Mexico and Central America Area Conference 1972, p. 45; italics added).

The following April, President Harold B. Lee quoted those words in general conference and, in effect, announced that the pioneering phase of gathering was now over. The gathering is now to be out of the world into the Church in every nation (see Conference Report, Apr. 1973, p. 7; or *Ensign*, July 1973, pp. 4-5).

As public schools became available, most of the Church schools were

closed. At once, seminaries and institutes of religion were established in many nations. Some few schools are left over from that pioneering period, Brigham Young University and Ricks College among them.

Now BYU is full to the brim and running over. It serves an ever-decreasing percentage of our college-age youth at an ever-increasing cost per student. Every year a larger number of qualified students must be turned away simply because there is no room for them.

Leaders and members plead for us to duplicate these schools elsewhere. But we cannot, nor should we, attempt to provide secular education for all members of the Church worldwide. Our youth have no choice but to attend other schools.

Those who cannot attend Church schools have been counseled by the First Presidency to gather where there is an institute of religion. The institute program will be greatly enhanced for your benefit.

Some of you live in countries where schooling is relatively easy to obtain. Others must struggle simply to learn to read and to write because schools, or the means to attend them, are beyond your reach.

Some of you require special education because of learning disabilities or limitations in what you can hear or see or how you can move about.

For many it is a matter of money. The economic condition of your family or your country makes getting an education seem like an impossible dream.

### No respecter of persons

You who find schooling easily available must remember this: "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35; see also Moroni 8:12; D&C 1:35; 38:16).

The Lord does not, and the Church cannot, admit to favoritism toward those who are able to obtain professional degrees as compared to those who seek training in a practical field or those who have little or no schooling at all.

Unless you have the vision of the ever-growing millions of members all over the world, you may not understand why the Brethren make the decisions we make concerning Church schools.

### The end of a tradition

This summer at a family reunion, Sister Packer and I announced the end of a family tradition. Our ten children and some of our grandchildren have attended BYU. It will not be possible for all of our grandchildren to follow that tradition.

We advised them to follow the counsel of the Brethren. If they cannot attend a Church school, and this will be increasingly the case, they should gather with other members of the Church at a school where an institute of religion is available to them. Then, as they study secular subjects, they may learn the "covenants and church articles" as the scriptures tell us we should (D&C 42:13).

They will not be judged on how many degrees they hold or how extensive their schooling may be, but on how well educated they are in those things which are of eternal value.

We told our family that we will be quite as proud of them learning a trade as we would a profession. We will be equally pleased with them if they choose vocational schools and make their living with their hands.

After all, education continues as long as we live. If there is ever an end to secular learning, surely there is no end to spiritual learning.

The Lord's work moves forward on the strength of those who labor in

the workaday world: the apprentice, artisan, journeyman, laborer, office worker, waitress, and, in a class by itself, homemaker.

### A warning

We must not ignore these warnings in the Book of Mormon:

"The people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and *their chances for learning*; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive *great learning* because of their riches.

"Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; . . .

"And thus there became a great inequality . . . insomuch that the church began to be broken up" (3 Nephi 6:12-14; italics added).

Jacob warned us of those who "when they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish." He added, "But to be learned is good *if* they hearken unto the counsels of God" (2 Nephi 9:28-29; italics added).

### A second tuition

For those privileged to attend a Church school, there is a tuition other than money which we must require of you—a tuition of conduct and performance. Students who enroll in Church schools do so after an interview with their bishop and, beginning this year, with their stake president. They must commit to a standard of conduct consistent with faithful Church membership.

Occasionally a bishop will interview one who easily qualifies scholastically but who has not kept the standards of the Church. Perhaps the bishop will reason, "The atmosphere at



a Church school will reform this one." Bishops should not do that. It is not fair to the literally thousands who are totally faithful but must be turned away because there is no room.

And if, while enrolled, a student is found to be transgressing or in violation of standards pledged at the time of enrollment, however hard it may be upon the bishop, the student, or the parents, continued enrollment at a Church school must be called into question.

### **Dedicated faculty**

Our faculties and staff are a miracle—men and women who have the highest academic degrees, many of them having been acclaimed for outstanding achievement. They are at once men and women of humility and faith.

We are grateful for teachers who will challenge students to high scholarship but would not even think of undermining testimony or acting in any way subversive to the progress of the Church and kingdom of God.

Because of such quality teachers, our schools can be unsurpassed in meeting the standards set by those who accredit schools, yet unique in mission, and contribute much to the Church even though a growing number of eligible students cannot enroll.

Because salaries of faculty and staff are paid from the tithes of the Church, there is a standard for them as well. A Church university is not established to provide employment for a faculty, and the personal scholarly research is not a dominant reason for funding a university.

The educational Mount Everest mentioned by President Kimball will not be achieved solely through the prominence of the faculty (see "BYU Inaugurates Ninth President," *Church News*, 22 Nov. 1980, p. 4). It will be

reached through the achievement of the students.

### **The purpose**

Our purpose is to produce students who have that rare and precious combination of a superb secular education, complemented by faith in the Lord, a knowledge of the doctrines He has revealed, and a testimony that they are true.

For those very few whose focus is secular and who feel restrained as students or as teachers in such an environment, there are at present in the United States and Canada alone over 3,500 colleges and universities where they may find the kind of freedom they value. And we are determined to honor the trust of the tithe payers of the Church.

Students at other schools soon learn that some professors deliberately undermine faith and challenge your moral and spiritual values. You in turn must be free, even in our own schools, to return that challenge and defend your right to believe in God, to keep the covenants you have made through baptism and which you renew through the sacrament.

### **A dream worth pursuing**

We encourage our youth in every country to get an education even if at times it seems hopeless. With determination and faith in the Lord, you will be blessed with success. It is a dream well worth pursuing.

On one occasion I spent a few minutes with a young man who had left high school and entered the military. Now he was trying to decide what to do with his life. I encouraged him to return to finish high school.

I did not provide him with money; the Church had no school for him, not even a scholarship. In those few minutes I simply taught him that self-reliance which is such a part of our

way of life. Even though over age, he returned to finish high school, and now he provides for his family and encourages his children in their search for truth.

### Follow the leaders

Since I touched upon the subject of the gathering of the Saints, I must read a verse from the Doctrine and Covenants:

"I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).

There are some among us now who have *not* been regularly ordained by the heads of the Church and who tell of impending political and economic chaos, the end of the world—something of the "sky is falling, chicken licken" of the fables. They are misleading members to gather to colonies or cults.

Those deceivers say that the Brethren do not know what is going on in the world or that the Brethren approve of their teaching but do not wish to speak of it over the pulpit. Neither is true. The Brethren, by virtue of traveling constantly everywhere on earth, certainly know what is going on and by virtue of prophetic insight are able to read the signs of the times.

Do not be deceived by them—those deceivers. If there is to be any gathering, it will be announced by those who have been regularly ordained and who are known to the Church to have authority.

Come away from any others. Follow your leaders, who have been duly ordained and have been publicly sustained, and you will not be led astray.

The Lord said:

"The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

"Light and truth forsake that evil one. . . .

"I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" (D&C 93:36–40).

God grant that as a church and as families and as individuals we can bring up our children, our youth, in light and truth and that they may receive the testimony of Him of whom we bear witness—our Redeemer, our Savior, even Jesus Christ—for which I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder David B. Haight, also a member of the Twelve, and he will be followed by Sister Betty Jo Jepsen, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency.

## Elder David B. Haight

Forever I will gratefully acknowledge our Lord's blessings to me, which I do again at this time.

As directed, we have assembled "to worship the King, the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 14:16) and to be built up in our faith and desires for righteousness. We testify to one another of our Master and receive counsel from those

appointed to administer the affairs of His kingdom here on earth.

Conferences of this Church are far more than a convention where views are expressed or policies adopted by vote, but they are assemblies where the mind and the will of the Lord is manifested by His servants. The Church is not a democracy—it is a kingdom.

### Warning against moral decline

Thoughtful, concerned people in many areas and nations of the world, as well as Latter-day Saints, are concerned with the growing pressures and influence of a disturbing cultural movement downgrading social and religious values and standards of morality. Each succeeding generation has weakened or lessened previously held Christ-centered ideals and values.

Michael Hirsley, who writes for the *Chicago Tribune*, recently observed that predicting America's religious future is risky business—that "the nation's most widely accepted prejudice is anti-Christian" (*The Billings Gazette*, 16 May 1992).

The actual signs of the times are threatening. Where will they lead? I, for one, am concerned.

Previous periods of moral decline brought forth divine attention. In past times, as at present, prophets of God have delivered a voice of warning. The Lord said to Ezekiel, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word . . . , and give them my warning from me" (Ezekiel 3:17).

From what we are witnessing happening in the world around us, I am impressed today to raise a voice of warning for mankind to prepare—by repentance—for the great day of the Lord (see D&C 1:11–12).

### Parable of the squirrel and the dog

I am indebted to Elder Dallin Oaks for an account, a modern-day parable which I refer to as the parable of the bushy-tailed squirrel, the tree, and the dog, which illustrates my concern:

As two men walked across an eastern university campus, they were attracted by a crowd of people surrounding a large maple tree. As they approached, they noticed that the

crowd was being amused by the antics of a fox-tailed squirrel circling the tree, climbing it, and running back down again. A red Irish setter dog crouched nearby, intently watching the squirrel. Each time the squirrel ran up the tree out of sight, the dog would slowly creep toward the tree. The squirrel paid little attention as the dog crept closer and closer, patiently biding its time. People watching this entertaining drama unfold knew what could happen, but they did nothing until in a flash the dog, catching the squirrel unaware, had it in the grip of his sharp teeth.

The people then rushed forward in horror, forcing the dog's mouth open to rescue the squirrel. It was too late. The squirrel was dead. Anyone could have warned the squirrel or held back the dog. But they had been momentarily amused and had watched silently while evil slowly crept up on good. When they rushed to the defense, it was too late.

We see around us daily that which is portrayed in this parable. We sit idly by, watching as an insidious stream of profanity, vulgarity, and demeaning behavior, a mocking of righteous ideals and principles, invades our homes and lives through most types of media, teaching our children negative values and moral corruption. We then become upset when our children perform differently than we would wish and social behavior continues to deteriorate.

### Governments abandoning God's principles

One newspaper headline reads, "The Battle Lines Are Clearly Drawn for America's . . . Cultural War." The article then asks:

"Who determines 'the norms by which we live . . . and govern ourselves' [?] Who decides what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, beautiful and ugly . . . ? Whose beliefs shall form the basis of law? . . .

"Our [cultural challenge] is about 'who we are' and 'what we believe' " (Patrick J. Buchanan, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 Sept. 1992, sec. A, p. 15).

Cal Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that some see "the state as either equal or superior to God in human affairs. Theirs is an uninvolved god who trickles down blessings when we want them, but whose commands are to be ignored when he asks us to do something we don't want to do.

"The fact is that our laws came from a standard of righteousness that was thought to promote the common good, or 'general welfare.' . . . That standard has been abandoned as biblical illiteracy has flourished, thanks in part to the state's antipathy toward immutable and eternal truths.

"William Penn warned, 'If we are not governed by God, then we will be ruled by tyrants.' One's view of God and his requirements for our personal lives determines one's view of the role of the state in public life. . . .

"Benjamin Franklin . . . observed that if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God's knowledge, 'can an empire rise without his aid?'"

"The late philosopher-theologian Francis Schaeffer wrote that 'God has ordained the state as a *delegated* authority; it is not autonomous. The state is to be an agent of justice, to restrain evil by punishing the wrongdoer, and to protect the good in society. When it does the reverse, *it has no proper authority*. It is then a usurped authority and as such it becomes lawless and is tyranny.' . . .

"This is what the culture war is about. It is a conflict between those who recognize an . . . existing God who has spoken about the order of the universe, the purpose of the state and the plan for individual lives and those who think those instructions are unclear, or open to interpretation, or that God is irrelevant to the debate or doesn't exist and we are on our own. . . .

"[Thirty years ago] students could still pray and read the Bible in school, abortion was illegal and 'gay rights' meant the right to be happy. . . . The issue now is whether we will become our own god" (Cal Thomas, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 Sept. 1992, sec. A, p. 18).

No wonder Isaiah, speaking under inspiration, declared, "Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

Unchangeable, God-centered principles and ideals adopted by our Founding Fathers not only form the basis of freedom but are the rivets that hold it together. There is a vast difference between principles that are unchangeable and preferences where there is a choice.

There should be no question about our standards, our beliefs—about who we are!

### Faith and courage of pioneers

Eyewitnesses of participants declare of the faith and courage of the converts who left their homes in America or Scotland or Sweden, as well as their families and material possessions, to join with Brigham Young and thousands of pioneers in establishing the Zion Joseph spoke about in the far west. Joseph Smith—their prophet, teacher, and friend—had seen God! He saw the living Christ! Few of all ever created have ever glimpsed such a vision—Peter, James, and John; Moses; Abraham; and Adam—only a few, ever. Joseph Smith belonged to an elite group who had been tried, trusted, and found true. He was one of those described by Abraham as one of the "noble and great ones" (Abraham 3:22) who became one of the Lord's choice servants while here on earth.

Courageous and faithful people by the tens of thousands heard and believed the glorious message of a new hope for a better way of life. Did they expect to find riches at the end of the

newly found rainbow? A life of comfort and ease? To the contrary! There was to be heartache, cold, pain, and hunger—with insults and injury, including tragic loss of life. It was the assurance they knew and felt of divine direction that expanded their faith to withstand such hardships.

Men and women of strong physical and spiritual strength conquered the wilderness and established what Isaiah saw seven hundred years before the birth of Christ when he wrote:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the . . . Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2–3).

What was their purpose? What was their motive? Not for the gold in California, but that they might worship God Almighty according to the dictates of their conscience. Such was their motive—to establish the Lord’s Church and teach the eternal principles revealed to their prophet, Joseph Smith. They had risked everything they had and were willing to endure any hardship. The recorded history of their journey and of the early beginnings in this valley is one of civilization’s finest hours.

There was little inviting in this endeavor except faith. In fact, they had been warned that nothing would grow; now farms, cities, and towns flourish. They were builders, not destroyers. They had a majestic dream of great things and lofty ideals—of homes and gardens, temples and meetinghouses, schools and universities. It would take work—hard work—and everyone’s best efforts to make it happen. They became experienced colonizers and bene-

factors to our nation and to humanity. Many of us are products of that early inspired colonization—its teachings and blessings of the value of hard work coupled with desire and faith for a better way of life.

The depth of their faith in a living God and their loyalty and obedience, as well as their solid foundation of righteousness, inspire us today. They believed that they had started on their way toward perfection—a process to be pursued laboriously throughout a lifetime. President Kimball declared, “[But] to each person is given a pattern—obedience through suffering, and perfection through obedience” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 168).

Their pathway was straight, uncluttered, unbending: they were to live the commandments of God and endure to the end. Today we know how we should live. We know right from wrong.

### Teach children the Lord’s ways

We are to teach and train our children in the ways of the Lord. Children should not be left to their own devices in learning character and family values, or in listening to and watching unsupervised music or television or movies as a means of gaining knowledge and understanding as to how to live their lives!

The Lord has clearly commanded that parents are to teach their children to do good (see Alma 39:12) and to teach them “the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, [or] the sin [shall] be upon the heads of the parents. . . .

“And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord” (D&C 68:25, 28).

“And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked;

neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God. . . .

"But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:14-15).

### **Obedience will protect us**

A concerned God—by His own finger—wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. They represent the basic law of the Almighty and have formed the underlying elements of civil and religious law ever since.

The Sermon on the Mount, given by our Lord Himself, details principles and instructions of heavenly origin.

Both of these divine statements of instruction—principles of which are so effectively taught in much greater detail in the Book of Mormon and

the Bible and our other scriptures—if obeyed, will strengthen mothers and fathers and sons and daughters, who all have equal duty to study the scriptures and gain strength and understanding of eternal things.

The only sure way to protect ourselves and our families from the onslaught of the teachings of the world is to commit to live the commandments of God; to attend our Church meetings, where we can learn and be strengthened in our testimonies and partake of the sacrament to renew our covenants; and to prepare ourselves to worthily enter the temple, where we may find a refuge from the world and a place of renewal of our capacity to cope with the evils of the world. I so declare to you as I leave you my witness and testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Sister Betty Jo N. Jepsen**

A friend of mine was encouraging her children to get into the car so they would not be late for their Sunday meetings. "Please hurry, Matthew," she said. "I'm coming, I'm coming," came a voice from somewhere in another part of the house. Mother replied, "Yes, and so is Christmas!"

At that moment three-year-old Matthew appeared in the nearby doorway, and he said, "Oh, goody, goody, I just love Christmas." Today I am here to tell you that I just love Christmas too. And one of the wonderful things about being members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that we make the events of the Christmas season a part of our day-to-day living.

### **Pondering the Savior's birth**

As I read the account of the birth of my Savior, I long to have the experi-

ence the Wise Men had—to be led by a star; or to experience what the shepherds did—to be invited to Bethlehem, invited by a choir of angels. I want to kneel at the manger and smell the clean straw and see that tiny baby with His earthly mother, to witness for myself this miracle. I believe that in every mortal there is an instinctive desire to come unto Christ. Perhaps we have a basic human need, because each of us is a child of God, to make that commitment to the spiritual part of our being. We each try to meet this need according to what we know.

As members of His true Church, perhaps we do not need to be taught new things as much as we need to be reminded of what we already know. This is what pondering the birth of our Savior does for all of us. I believe it reminds our mortal minds of things our spirits already know.

### The invitation to come unto Christ

In this latter day I have been invited to witness marvelous things for myself. The invitation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Come unto Christ" and "Come back," is meant for each of God's children. This invitation has stood true since Jesus said to His disciples, "Come, follow me" (see Matthew 4:19). Through the dispensations, prophets have issued the same invitation to all who will listen.

The prophet Alma, the son of Alma, carried this important message to the members in Zarahemla who needed to be reminded. The prophet said:

"Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. . . .

"Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness" (Alma 5:33, 35).

As a baptized member of the Church, I hear the invitation and I wonder, How do I get there from here? Because I know the Lord intends to include all of us in this invitation, my personal, honest response is the same as my friend Matthew's: "I'm coming." Now what is my duty? Alma reminded the people of Zarahemla of their duty, ending with the important phrase, "Come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness" (Alma 5:35; see also 4:3). By using Alma's counsel as our guide, come with me on a journey to remember what we can do to answer His invitation.

### Search the word of God

We can search the word of God. Through studying and pondering the scriptures and the words of the latter-day prophets, we can *feast* upon the words of Christ, and the words will tell us all the things that we should do (see

2 Nephi 32:3). Then we must *nourish the word* and allow it to *take root* (see Alma 32:41–43). After we hearken to the word and hold fast to it, we are promised that temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary will not overpower us (see 1 Nephi 15:24). We will be able to recognize the truth when we hear it just as the shepherds and the Wise Men knew when they were told about the Savior's birth. The scriptures are the word of God and a light to us and the world, and we can follow this light as if it were our guiding star.

### Pray

We can pray. We can call upon our Heavenly Father in the name of our Savior. Prayer provides an opportunity for us to express gratitude. Taking an inventory of our blessings fills us with hope. "Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love" (Moroni 7:48).

We can ask for what we need hour by hour and minute by minute. It is possible to have this personal conversation with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ by kneeling in prayer, just as surely as if we could kneel beside the manger and see the Savior there.

### Participate in the saving ordinances

We can participate in the saving ordinances. We are reminded of our baptismal covenants by partaking of the sacrament. The sacrament prayers help us remember the Savior and His goodness. We can live worthy to participate in the temple ordinances. These ordinances are the culminating act of conversion of mortal men and women, and they fulfill that need for an earthly commitment to heavenly knowledge. We can consider our visits to the temple as a personal pilgrimage to a sacred place, as the shepherds must have considered their journey to that humble manger.

## Increase our talents

We can increase our talents. These are the gifts we bring. The talents we have come from our Heavenly Father, and to honor Him we can develop and expand them and then return them to Him. All of us possess some talent which we can practice, increase, and offer. Are you regularly practicing your talents? Perhaps your talent is kindness or gratitude. How about being cheerful, helpful, and unselfish? How about practicing that winning smile? The Wise Men brought their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We can bring our talents.

## Serve others

We can serve others. Serving others in any way is an indication of our desire to respond to the Savior's invitation to come unto Him. How about a checkup on our service to others? Let's ask ourselves, Will I make that visit to my homebound friend? Will I open my mouth to defend and testify of the truth? Will I give of my worldly goods? Do I share some of my fresh, productive time with my children? Do I serve with joy in my Church calling?

There are times I feel overwhelmed with the calling I have, but I trust in the Lord to give me courage and help me do His will. Likely most of you want to feel secure and safe and quietly live within boundaries which are familiar and comfortable. However, without the risk of new experiences and challenging calls to serve, we fail to grow and are not as useful in the work of building the Lord's kingdom as we need to be. Just as the shepherds left familiar terrain in dark of night for a new experience, we are called to leave secure and comfortable settings to serve and to gain experience.

## As if we had trod to Bethlehem

I believe that each of us can recreate that familiar scene in Bethlehem in our own lives. We can have a star to follow just as the Wise Men did. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). The scriptures can light our way, and our testimonies can be a light from within. The voices of angels can be the voices of our beloved prophet and His servants. We can kneel at the feet of our Savior just as literally as the shepherds and the Wise Men, but we do it in prayer. The gifts we bring are our talents. We can shout "Hosanna" like that angelic choir and spread the good news by bearing our testimonies. Each new day is an opportunity to bind ourselves to act according to what we know (see D&C 43:8). By *works of righteousness* we can come unto Christ each day of our lives just as if we had trod in our sandaled feet the rocky path to Bethlehem, holding a staff or bearing gifts.

I pray that Heavenly Father will help us be wise men and wise women — wise enough to accept His invitation, nourish His word, and follow a "straight course to eternal bliss" (Alma 37:44). May we all cheerfully answer, "I'm coming." For I testify that "if a man bringeth forth good works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him" (Alma 5:41). This I do in the name of the "shepherd [who] hath called after you and is still calling after you" (Alma 5:37), Jesus Christ, amen.

## President Hinckley

Thank you, Sister Betty Jo Jepsen, first counselor in the Primary General Presidency, and Elder David B. Haight of the Council of the Twelve, who spoke just before her.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Nearer, My God,



to Thee.” Elders John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, and Augusto A. Lim, each of whom was sustained as a newly called Seventy, will speak to us following the singing.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

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## Elder John E. Fowler

At the beginning of this ministry I gratefully acknowledge your sustaining vote and the continuing love and support of my eternal companion, my children, parents, and family.

### A sacred place to declare God's word

As this tabernacle was dedicated on October 9, 1875, President John Taylor read the following words of petition and dedication in Brigham Young's inspired prayer:

“We dedicate and consecrate that portion of this house where our President and thy servants now are, to be a holy and sacred place wherein thy servants may stand forth to declare thy words and minister unto thy people in the name of thy Son for ever. . . .

“May thy holy angels and ministering spirits be in and round about this habitation, that when thy servants are called upon to stand in these sacred places, to minister unto thy people, the visions of eternity may be open to their view, and they may be filled with the spirit and inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the gift and power of God; and let all thy people who hearken to the words of thy servants drink freely at the fountain of the waters of life, that they may become wise unto salvation” (*Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1875, p. 724).

Since the beginning of this latter-day work, those who have stood to address the Saints have done so only after much reflection, contemplation, fasting, and prayer. Surely each speaker has sought for “the visions of eternity” that he might be “filled with the spirit and inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the gift and power of God.” The hope

in each of their hearts, as in mine today, has been to bless the lives of those who will hear and hearken with words that will cause them to become “wise unto salvation.”

### Hear the voice of the Lord

Do the members of the Church truly understand the importance of the messages spoken from this pulpit in general conference sessions and other special meetings held in the Tabernacle? Do they understand their responsibility to “hear the voice of the Lord” through the voice of his servants? (D&C 1:14). For certainly, “whether by [the Lord's] voice or by the voice of [his] servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

Do our members understand that the inspired counsel and direction they receive from the leaders of the Church come as a voice of warning from a loving Heavenly Father who knows the various calamities that “should come upon the inhabitants of the earth”? (D&C 1:17). “The anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword *is* bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth” (D&C 1:13; italics added).

“Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear” (D&C 1:11).

### Spiritual poverty and darkness

Because many “know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12), people of the world are impoverished for the word of God, spoken in clarity and plainness by true servants of the Lord and lived in a

spirit of obedience by his disciples. Spiritually bankrupt lives of individuals and families stand as mute testimony of the futility of attempting to live in today's society without revealed direction from our Heavenly Father through his prophets and Apostles. How much of the evil in the world, how much of the suffering and sorrow and sadness could be eliminated if people would hearken to the inspired instructions of the leaders of the Church spoken from this pulpit.

We are concerned at the number of lives being lived in relative spiritual darkness when available to each are the words of the prophets in our day. And these prophetic utterances become a "lamp unto [the] feet, and a light unto [the] path" of each of Heavenly Father's children willing to listen and then live in conformity with revealed truth (Psalm 119:105).

President Benson has taught, "Success in righteousness, the power to avoid deception and resist temptation, guidance in our daily lives, healing of the soul—these are but a few of the promises the Lord has given to those who will come to His word" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

### Importance of conference messages

Accordingly, with great urgency we invite all to come to the source of the fountain of light and truth, even the revealed word of God as taught in the scriptures and by the present prophets and Apostles and other general leaders of this Church. We invite all to hear and hearken to the messages of this and other recent conferences.

President Benson's recent instruction on this point is timeless: "For the next six months your conference edition of the *Ensign* should stand next to your standard works and be referred to frequently. As my dear friend and brother [President] Harold B. Lee said,

we should let these conference addresses 'be the guide to [our] walk and talk during the next six months. These are the important matters the Lord sees fit to reveal to this people in this day'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84).

And hear these inspired statements from three conference addresses by President Marion G. Romney:

"In this conference we have been greatly entertained at times with eloquent oratory. We have been taught by great teachers. We have heard enough truth and direction in this conference to bring us into the presence of God if we would follow it. We have been taken on to the spiritual mountain and shown visions of great glory, but how many of us have heard that voice saying we would have a part therein" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1954, pp. 132-33).

"What we get out of general conference is a build-up of our spirits as we listen to those particular principles and practices of the gospel which the Lord inspires the present leadership of the Church to bring to our attention at the time. . . . He knows why he inspired the other brethren who have talked in this conference to say what they have said. It is our high privilege to hear, through these men, what the Lord would say if he were here. If we do not agree with what they say, it is because we are out of harmony with the Spirit of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, pp. 126-27).

"Today the Lord is revealing his will to all the inhabitants of the earth, and to members of the Church in particular, on the issues of this our day through the living prophets, with the First Presidency at the head. What they say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here in person. This is the rock foundation of Mormonism. . . . So I repeat again, what the presidency say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here, and it is scripture. It should

be studied, understood, and followed, even as the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and other scriptures. Those who follow this course will not interpret what they say as being inspired by political bias or selfishness; neither will they say that the brethren are uninformed as to the circumstances of those affected by their counsel; or that their counsels cannot be accepted because they are not prefaced by the quotation, "Thus saith the Lord."

"Those . . . who will through mighty prayer and earnest study inform themselves as to what these living prophets say, and act upon it, will be visited by the spirit of the Lord and know by the spirit of revelation that they speak the mind and will of the Father" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, p. 90).

### **Prophets' words bless the faithful**

What of the volumes of teachings from our beloved prophet and President, Ezra Taft Benson? He is now in the fiftieth year of service as a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Moses, his hands have become somewhat heavy from his ministry (see Exodus 17:11-12), but his words, spoken from this pulpit throughout his inspired ministry, will continue to bless the lives of the faithful.

In an inspired statement from a much earlier day, Elder John A. Widtsoe spoke of the utterances of the men who have stood at the head of the Church:

"When [prophets] speak under the influence of [their] prophetic power, they amplify or add to the body of revelation possessed by the Church. They guide us in the maze of contending forces. Each one . . . uses past revelation and the new, to meet the needs of the people of his day. The discourses of these men . . . should be read and observed as inspired messages for our guidance toward joy on earth and hereafter" (in *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946], pp. xi-xii).

### **Hearken to the prophets' messages**

Therefore we repeat our plea that members and others return to the messages of our beloved prophet. We should read them and heed them. And as we hearken to those messages, along with the other words of the living prophets and leaders spoken from this pulpit, may we become "wise unto salvation."

It is my witness that President Ezra Taft Benson, his Counselors, and the members of the Council of the Twelve are apostles and prophets of the Lamb of God and that this Church, and its work of bringing souls to Christ, rests solidly upon the foundation of the goodness, faith, and unity of our living apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ lives and is the very cornerstone of this work of salvation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Jay E. Jensen**

I am so thankful for my wife and children. To enjoy their love, confidence, and support is one of the greatest blessings of my life. I express my heartfelt gratitude to parents who loved and lived the gospel, and also to

my brothers and sisters, from whom I have learned so much. I thank my Brethren of the General Authorities for their kind and gentle tutoring. I express my gratitude to all with whom I have worked over the years and to

those who expressed their love and support for me in this new calling. I go forward with faith in the Lord and His leaders, relying on the promises of the Lord that we do not receive callings such as these but what we have been foreordained to the same.

### **Try the power of the word**

I love the scriptures. I testify that they are the word of God. I have likened a verse from Alma to my life: the scriptures have had a great tendency to lead me to do that which is just; yea, they have had a more powerful effect upon my mind than the sword or anything else which has happened unto me; therefore I have tried the virtue of the word of God (see Alma 31:5).

President Benson counseled, "Immerse yourselves in [the scriptures] daily so you will have the power of the Spirit" ("The Power of the Word," *Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82).

President Kimball said, "I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures, the distance narrows and the spirituality returns" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 135).

### **Remember also the promises**

While presiding over a South American mission, I traveled to a distant city to interview missionaries, hold a zone conference, and conduct a district conference. I discovered among the missionaries some problems. In the district conference, other serious problems dealing with members and leaders surfaced. In my mind the negative out-

weighed the positive with both missionaries and members, leaving me frustrated and disappointed. After four days of interviews and meetings, I boarded the airplane with a heavy heart to return home.

I often read scriptures while traveling, and I turned to them for comfort and direction. I read a few of my favorite passages. While turning the pages, I stopped at the third section of the Doctrine and Covenants. I was deeply touched by the first five verses as they applied to my concerns.

When I read a verse, I often insert my name in it. I did so with verse 5 and found the help I needed to remove my gloomy feelings: "Behold, you [Jay Jensen] have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also the promises which were made to you [Jay Jensen]" (D&C 3:5).

The words "remember also the promises" struck me with unusual power. I identified with the Prophet Joseph Smith when he read James 1:5. The words "remember also the promises" seemed to "enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on [them] again and again" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). During those four days I had focused on nothing but problems. I had not stopped to consider one single promise.

I had with me on the airplane that day a copy of my patriarchal blessing. I read it, noting several marvelous promises. I reviewed in my mind the promises given to me when I was set apart as a mission president. I turned to additional scriptures and pondered the promises in each one. I learned then and have had reinforced to me again and again that when we search the scriptures, we will come to know that "they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled" (D&C 1:37).

## Categories of promises

The Lord has promised us specific blessings for reading and studying the scriptures. To identify these promises, a helpful exercise for me has been to make two columns on a sheet of paper and at the top of one column write the words "Promises for This Life" and in the other column the words "Promises for the Next Life." When I find a promise, I note the reference and the promise under one of the two columns.

I have found repeated in different places in the scriptures two major promises for reading and studying the scriptures that pertain to the next life: one is exaltation, and the other is eternal life. For example, Nephi said, "Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, . . . Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

The surprising discovery was that most promises that come to us for reading and studying the scriptures pertain to mortality. Three categories of promises to consider are promises of power, promises of increase, and other promises. Time will permit me to cite but a few of these.

### Promises of power

Consider the following five promises of power:

1. *Power to overcome evil.* Nephi taught, "Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, . . . the fiery darts of the adversary [could not] overpower them unto blindness" (1 Nephi 15:24; see also Psalms 17:4; 119:98–101, 104; Helaman 3:29–30).

2. *Power to live righteously.* Alma "did . . . preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty" (Alma 4:19). The Psalmist said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105; see also 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Helaman 15:7–8).

3. *Power to teach convincingly.* Alma and the sons of Mosiah "had searched the scriptures diligently . . . and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (Alma 17:2–3; see also 2 Timothy 3:16). To Hyrum Smith the Lord said, "First seek to obtain my word . . . ; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21; see also 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Alma 4:19; 31:5; D&C 84:85).

4. *Power to call down the powers of heaven.* Jacob said that "we search the prophets . . . and our faith becometh unshaken, insomuch that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea" (Jacob 4:6; see also Helaman 10:4–5).

5. *Power to change the heart and disposition.* Samuel taught the Nephites that the Lamanites were "led to believe the holy scriptures, . . . which are written, which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them" (Helaman 15:7; see also 1 Nephi 15:20). Three marvelous promises.

### Promises of increase

Consider now the following promises of increase:

1. *Increase in hope and joy.* The Apostle Paul taught that "we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4; see also 1 Nephi 11:25; Jacob 2:8; 4:6; Alma 44:5; D&C 19:23).

2. *Increase in spirituality.* "The preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just" (Alma 31:5; see also 2 Nephi 4:15–16; Moroni 6:4).

3. *Increase in knowledge and understanding.* Nephi taught that "the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). To Joseph

Smith the Lord said, "The holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16; see also Psalms 19:7; 119:98-101; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Alma 12:10; 17:2-3; D&C 18:34-36).

4. *Increase in the power of discernment.* "The word of God . . . is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil" (Helaman 3:29). "And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived" (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37; see also Hebrews 4:12).

5. *Increase in testimony.* From the Doctrine and Covenants: "You can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words" (D&C 18:36; see also Psalm 19:7).

### Other promises

In addition to these general categories of promises of power and increase,

there are other promises, such as "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8) and as Joseph Smith said, "Faith comes by hearing the word of God" (*History of the Church*, 3:379).

President Howard W. Hunter has said: "When we . . . read and study the scriptures, benefits and blessings of many kinds come to us. This is the most profitable of all study in which we could engage" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1979, p. 90; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, p. 64).

May we "remember also the promises." I testify that the scriptures are the word of God. I love them. I testify that God lives. He is our Father. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith just as he said they did. President Ezra Taft Benson is God's prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Augusto A. Lim

### Gospel blessings in the Philippines

I would like to express my love and appreciation to my eternal companion for the support and love that she has completely extended to me through all these years of membership in this Church. I suppose many of you already know I came from the Philippines, home to close to 67 million people, the Pearl of the Orient, but now a land devastated by earthquakes, typhoons, floods, and even volcanic eruptions. I will not, however, talk about the calamities that have caused much hardship and tested the faith of our people, but I would rather talk about the great spiritual blessings that have been experienced in abundance as the gospel is spread in the land.

The restored gospel was first introduced by Latter-day Saint servicemen and women while serving in the Philippines near the end of World War II,

but missionary work officially started in the Philippines on April 28, 1961, when Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, met with a small group of members at the American War Memorial Cemetery in the suburbs of Manila to offer a prayer invoking the blessing of the Lord on the missionary work in the Philippines (see Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission).

Before giving his prayer, President Hinckley, in a brief talk, made this prophetic statement: "What we begin here will affect the lives of thousands upon thousands of people in this island republic, and its effects will go from generation to generation for great and everlasting good" (quoted in Conference Report, Philippine Islands Area Conference 1975, p. 20).

After his brief remarks, President Hinckley offered a prayer in which he said:

"We invoke Thy blessing, Father dear, upon the missionaries who shall come [here], that Thy Spirit may touch their hearts, that their lives may be clean and virtuous, that their examples may be marvelous before the people, [that] they may be blessed, as it were, with the 'gift of tongues,' that they shall speak the language of the people, that they shall work with singleness of purpose to Thy name's honor and glory, that they shall go forth without fear, [that none shall stay them, and] that they shall declare with teaching and testimony, [the] restoration of Thy holy work for the blessing of Thy children. Father, give them joy and courage and faith and satisfaction in their labors, and make them fruitful.

"We invoke Thy blessings upon the people of this land, that they shall be friendly and hospitable and kind and gracious to those who shall come here, and that many, yea Lord, we pray that there shall be many thousands who shall receive this message and be blessed thereby. Wilt Thou bless them with receptive minds and understanding hearts, and with faith to receive, and with courage to live the principles of the gospel, and with a desire to share with others the blessings which they shall receive. We pray that there shall be many men—faithful, good, virtuous, true men—who shall join the Church and who shall receive the blessings of the priesthood, and who shall accept and grow in leadership, [that Thy work here shall be handled largely by local brethren,] under the direction of those who hold the keys in this day and time, according to the law and order of Thy church" (in Manuscript History of the Southern Far East Mission, 30 June 1961, pp. 9–10).

### **Church growth in the Philippines**

A few days after that historic meeting, the first four full-time missionaries arrived from the Southern Far East

Mission, based in Hong Kong. From a handful of members in 1961, the Church in the Philippines has since grown at a remarkable rate, now increasing by more than two thousand members per month. As a result of close correlation between the full-time missionaries and members, membership is now three hundred thousand distributed in forty-eight stakes, sixty-five districts, and thirteen missions. Five of the thirteen mission presidents, all of the eight Regional Representatives, and all stake and district presidents are now native Filipinos. Sixty to seventy percent of the more than two thousand full-time missionaries now laboring in the field are also native Filipinos. And now, standing majestically on elevated grounds, overlooking a valley where hundreds of thousands live in the heart of metro Manila, is the Manila Philippines Temple.

### **Grateful for good missionaries**

Surely the prayer of President Hinckley is being fulfilled as thousands of young men and women, as well as elderly couples, are responding to the clarion call of the Lord "that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city, yea, in those regions round about where it has not been proclaimed" (D&C 66:5).

After three years of working closely as mission president with these young, devoted, upright, and virtuous missionaries, I am humbled and grateful for the good they do. These young ambassadors of the Lord leave the comfort of home and the companionship of loved ones and go to foreign lands or places far from home, bearing strong testimonies of the Savior, teaching the gospel with faith and sure knowledge of its truthfulness. My testimony has been strengthened as I see the great effort of missionaries to overcome homesickness and adapt

to new environments, new customs, new languages they must learn, and food so different from Mother's home-cooked meal in their noble desire to proclaim the gospel to the world.

I am a witness to the daily acts of sacrifices of these missionaries as they cheerfully endure hardships like energy-sapping walks of many kilometers, or riding on their bicycles under the heat of the burning sun or the cold monsoon rain, and the discomfort of riding on fully loaded jeeps driving at high speed along bumpy and dusty roads to reach teaching appointments on time.

Indeed our modern-day heralds of truth laboring in the Philippines and other lands work hard and pray constantly to be worthy instruments of the Lord in testifying and challenging all to come unto Christ through repentance and baptism, "teaching them to [do] all things" which the Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:20).

Like the sons of Mosiah, "they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God" (Alma 17:2). And "they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God" (17:3). And "they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit" (17:5). But after the completion of an honorable mission, like Ammon, one of the sons of Mosiah, these missionaries can also say, "My joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God" (Alma 26:11).

### **Reasons for the Church's growth**

We are also witnessing the literal fulfillment of the prayers and blessings for the people of our land given by President Hinckley that lovely April

morning in 1961. Many thousands have been touched by the Spirit as the gospel message is brought to many homes by committed missionaries, with the help of members who willingly share the blessings of their Church membership.

We are often asked the reasons behind this phenomenal growth in membership. I can only venture some opinions. First, being perhaps the only Christian country in Asia for many centuries now has prepared the people for the coming of the gospel. The Philippines' being considered the third largest English-speaking country in the world certainly makes it easier for people to understand the message of the gospel and is the reason for the fast development of the leadership skills of its members.

But more important is the humble nature of the people and their dependence on the Lord for the things they stand in need of, making them receptive to the promptings of the Spirit. Because of economic difficulties experienced in the Philippines, the gospel is the answer, and rightly so, to the people's prayer for a better way of life.

As a result of the gospel-centered lives of many Latter-day Saints, people around them see changes in their lives that in turn give them hope. Member families may still live in humble homes with dirt or bamboo floors and walls, but because of their positive response to the gospel plan, and through their obedience to the Lord's commandments, they receive the promised blessings. As a result, people see the changes in these families who are now living in a more sanitary condition and are healthier, more educated, always ready and delighted to help others, grateful for what they have, no matter how humble, and generally happier. They have obeyed the Lord's counsel to "learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in



me" (D&C 19:23). Generally, however, the faith, devotion, and living of correct gospel principles by the members have improved their lives not only spiritually but also temporally, for did not the Lord say that the "willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days"? (D&C 64:34).

That the Lord will continue to bless our people with joy and peace of mind as they obey His commandments

and the counsels of our leaders in the midst of adversity is my humble prayer in Jesus' name, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elders John E. Fowler, Jay E. Jensen, and Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy have spoken to us.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us.

## Elder James E. Faust

As this conference comes to a close, I wish to speak of a priceless heritage. I acknowledge the faithful pioneers in all of the countries of the world who have helped establish the Church in their lands. First-generation members of the Church are indeed pioneers. They are and have been men and women of deep faith and devotion. Today, however, I speak primarily of the priceless legacy which belongs to the descendants of all pioneers, but especially to those who came into this valley and settled in Utah and other parts of western America.

### Reenacting the handcart trek

In celebration of July 24th this year, we joined the Saints of the Riverton Wyoming Stake. Under the direction of President Robert Lorimer and his counselors, the youth and youth leaders of that stake reenacted part of the handcart trek which took place in 1856. We started early in a four-wheel-drive van and went first to Independence Rock, where we picked up the Mormon Trail. We saw Devil's Gate a few miles up the road. Our souls were subdued when we arrived at the hallowed ground of Martin's Cove, the site where the Martin Handcart Company, freezing and starving, waited for the rescue wagons to come

from Salt Lake City. About fifty-six members of the Martin Handcart Company perished there from hunger and cold.

It was an emotional experience to see the Sweetwater River crossing where most of the five hundred members of the company were carried across the icy river by three brave young men. Later, all three of the boys died from the effects of the terrible strain and great exposure of that crossing. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child and later declared publicly: "That act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end" (quoted in Solomon F. Kimball, "Belated Emigrants of 1856," *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1914, p. 288).

We went farther along the trail to the site where the members of the Willie Handcart Company were rescued. We felt that we were standing on holy ground. At that site twenty-one members of that party died from starvation and cold. We continued to travel up over Rocky Ridge, seven thousand three hundred feet high. This is the highest spot on the Mormon Trail. The two-mile ascension to Rocky Ridge gains over seven hundred feet in altitude. It was very difficult for all of the

pioneers to travel over Rocky Ridge. It was particularly agonizing for the members of the Willie Handcart Company, who struggled over that ridge in the fall of 1856 in a blizzard. Many had worn shoes, and the sharp rocks caused their feet to bleed, leaving a trail of blood in the snow.

As we walked over Rocky Ridge, two square nails and an old-style button were picked up. No doubt these objects were shaken loose going over the sharp rocks. My soul was sobered to be in that historic spot. Several of my ancestors crossed that ridge, though none was in the handcart companies. Not all of my forebears who started in the great exodus to the West made it even to the Rocky Ridge. Two of them died at Winter Quarters.

As I walked over Rocky Ridge, I wondered if I have sacrificed enough. In my generation I have not seen so much sacrifice by so many. I wonder what more I should have done, and should be doing, to further this work.

A few miles farther, at Radium Springs, we caught up with 185 young people and their leaders from the Riverton stake, who had been pulling handcarts in reenactment of the handcart treks. We bore testimony of the faith and heroism of those who struggled in agony over that trail 136 years ago.

### **Bodil Mortensen and James Kirkwood**

We went on to Rock Creek Hollow, where the Willie Handcart Company made camp. Thirteen members of the Willie company who perished from cold, exhaustion, and starvation are buried in a common grave at Rock Creek Hollow. Two additional members who died during the night are buried nearby. Two of those buried at Rock Creek Hollow were heroic children of tender years: Bodil Mortensen, age nine, from Denmark; and James Kirkwood, age eleven, from Scotland.

Bodil apparently was assigned to care for some small children as they crossed Rocky Ridge. When they arrived at camp, she must have been sent to gather firewood. She was found frozen to death leaning against the wheel of her handcart, clutching sagebrush.

Let me tell you of James Kirkwood. James was from Glasgow, Scotland. On the trip west, James was accompanied by his widowed mother and three brothers, one of whom, Thomas, was nineteen and crippled and had to ride in the handcart. James's primary responsibility on the trek was to care for his little four-year-old brother, Joseph, while his mother and oldest brother, Robert, pulled the cart. As they climbed Rocky Ridge, it was snowing and there was a bitter cold wind blowing. It took the whole company twenty-seven hours to travel fifteen miles. When little Joseph became too weary to walk, James, the older brother, had no choice but to carry him. Left behind the main group, James and Joseph made their way slowly to camp. When the two finally arrived at the fireside, James, "having so faithfully carried out his task, collapsed and died from exposure and over-exertion" (private letter, Don H. Smith to Robert Lorimer, 20 Feb. 1990, quoting account of Don Chislett).

### **Rescuing the handcart companies**

Also heroic were the rescuers who responded to President Brigham Young's call in the October 1856 general conference. President Young called for forty young men, sixty to sixty-five teams of mules or horses, wagons loaded with twenty-four thousand pounds of flour to leave in the next day or two to "bring in those people now on the plains" (LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* [Glendale, Ca.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960], p. 121). The rescuers went swiftly to relieve the suffering travelers.

When the rescued sufferers got close to the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young convened a meeting on this block. He directed the Saints in the valley to receive the sufferers into their homes, make them comfortable, and administer food and clothing to them. Said President Young: "Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. . . . We want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them" (Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, p. 139).

When the rescuers brought the Willie handcart pioneers into this valley, it is recorded by Captain Willie: "On our arrival there the Bishops of the different Wards took every person, who was not provided with a home, to comfortable quarters. Some had their hands and feet badly frozen; but everything which could be done to alleviate their sufferings, was done. . . . Hundreds of the Citizens flocked round the wagons on our way through the City, cordially welcoming their Brethren and Sisters to their mountain home" (James G. Willie, in *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 9 Nov. 1856, p. 15).

### The legacy of the pioneers

These excruciating experiences developed in these pioneers an unshakable faith in God. Said Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford, "But I believe the Recording Angel has inscribed in the archives above, and that my sufferings for the Gospel's sake will be sanctified unto me for my good" (*Leaves from the Life of Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson Kingsford* [Ogden, Utah: 1908], p. 7).

In addition to the legacy of faith bequeathed by those who crossed the plains, they also left a great heritage of love—love of God and love of mankind. It is an inheritance of sobriety,

independence, hard work, high moral values, and fellowship. It is a birthright of obedience to the commandments of God and loyalty to those whom God has called to lead this people. It is a legacy of forsaking evil. Immorality, alternative life-styles, gambling, selfishness, dishonesty, unkindness, addiction to alcohol and drugs are not part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here in Utah there is a voter decision about gambling to be made in a few weeks. The Church is not retreating from its stand on this issue. But as contests and issues heat up, we counsel members of the Church to be tolerant and understanding. We all have our moral agency, but if we use it unwisely, we must pay the price. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said, "We may use our agency as to whether we shall obey or disobey; and if we disobey we must abide the penalty" (*Fundamentals of the Church Welfare Plan* [address at bishops' meeting, 6 Oct. 1944], p. 3).

### Consecrated through their suffering

I cannot help wondering why these intrepid pioneers had to pay for their faith with such a terrible price in agony and suffering. Why were not the elements tempered to spare them from their profound agony? I believe their lives were consecrated to a higher purpose through their suffering. Their love for the Savior was burned deep in their souls, and into the souls of their children, and their children's children. The motivation for their lives came from a true conversion in the center of their souls. As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "When there throbs in the heart of an individual Latter-day Saint a great and vital testimony of the truth of this work, he will be found doing his duty in the Church" (*Ensign*, May 1984, p. 99).

Above and beyond the epic historical events they participated in, the pioneers found a guide to personal

living. They found reality and meaning in their lives. In the difficult days of their journey, the members of the Martin and Willie handcart companies encountered some apostates from the Church who were returning from the West, going back to the East. These apostates tried to persuade some in the companies to turn back. A few did turn back. But the great majority of the pioneers went forward to a heroic achievement in this life, and to eternal life in the life hereafter.

Francis Webster, a member of the Martin company, stated, "Everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities" (quoted in David O. McKay, "Pioneer Women," *Relief Society Magazine*, Jan. 1948, p. 8). I hope that this priceless legacy of faith left by the pioneers will inspire all of us to more fully participate in the Savior's work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of his children.

### Invitation to come back

You who are among the descendants of these noble pioneers have a priceless heritage of faith and courage. If there are any of you who do not enjoy fellowship with us in the gospel of Jesus Christ, we invite you to seek to know what instilled such great faith in your ancestors and what motivated them to willingly pay such a terrible price for their membership in this Church. To those who have been offended or lost interest or who have turned away for any reason, we invite all of you to join in full fellowship again with us. The faithful members, with all their faults and failings, are humbly striving to do God's holy work across the world. We need your help in the great struggle against the powers of darkness so prevalent in the world

today. In becoming a part of this work, you can all satisfy the deepest yearnings of your souls. You can come to know the personal comfort that can be found in seeking the sacred and holy things of God. You can enjoy the blessings and covenants administered in the holy temples. You can have great meaning and purpose in your lives, even in the profane world in which we live. You can have strength of character so that you can act for yourselves and not be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26).

A few years ago the First Presidency of the Church issued the invitation to all to come back:

"We are aware of some who are inactive, of others who have become critical and are prone to find fault, and of those who have been disfellowshipped or excommunicated because of serious transgressions.

"To all such we reach out in love. We are anxious to forgive in the spirit of Him who said: 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.' (D&C 64:10)

"We encourage Church members to forgive those who may have wronged them. To those who have ceased activity and to those who have become critical, we say, 'Come back. Come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints.'

"We are confident that many have [wanted] to return, but have felt awkward about doing so. We assure you that you will find open arms to receive you and willing hands to assist you" ("An Invitation to Come Back," *Church News*, 22 Dec. 1985, p. 3).

At the close of this great conference and on behalf of my Brethren, I sincerely and humbly reiterate that request. And we open our arms to you. I so declare in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Faust, for your moving testimony. I may say that it was my privilege recently to dedicate three monuments on that pioneer trail in the areas of which he spoke, monuments which were erected by the people of the Riverton Wyoming Stake, and that we have acquired the property at Rock Creek Hollow, where were buried the thirteen who died in one night and the two the next day.

Before hearing the closing remarks of President Thomas S. Monson, we express appreciation to all who have provided the inspiring and uplifting music heard during this conference.

We thank city officials and many others: the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance;

the ushers and interpreters; and those responsible for the beautiful flowers on the stand and on Temple Square.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for coverage of the conference.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable and satellite systems who have made their facilities available. Thank you, one and all. And thank you, my beloved brethren and sisters, for your attendance on this great occasion. May the Lord bless you.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "God So Loved the World." The benediction will be given by Elder Lynn A. Sorensen, who was released yesterday as a member of the Seventy. The conference will then stand adjourned for six months.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### A glorious conference

Someone said, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." That's the feeling that we have today.

Traditionally the President of the Church, the Lord's prophet, seer, and revelator, provides the concluding expressions of a general conference and gives his blessing to all. Humbly and respectfully I respond to the assignment to represent him at this time.

This has been a glorious conference. The prayers have been sincere and from the heart; the music and singing have lifted us heavenward and given us an upward reach we thought perhaps was beyond our grasp. The Brethren who have spoken, and Sister Jepsen, have declared the word of God and touched our hearts with their inspired messages. We are all better for having been a part of the conference.

### We sustain and love President Benson

President Benson's chair has remained unoccupied during the conference sessions, which brings some sadness to our hearts. His ready smile, the wave of his hand, the declarations of truth that have marked his influence have been missed. However, President Benson, we are pleased and grateful that you have been a part of the conference through television. Our hearts go out to you in the passing of your beloved eternal companion, Flora. How thankful we are for the sacred covenant that binds you two sweethearts together for all eternity! The entire Church joins in a mighty prayer to our Heavenly Father that you may be cradled in the palm of His hand and blessed according to your need and His divine purposes. We sustain you. We follow you. We love you—our prophet.

### Closing words at conference

President Benson revered President David O. McKay, who supervised his missionary labors in Great Britain those long years ago. President McKay closed a conference with these words:

"As we come to this parting hour, I hope that the teachings and life of the Master seem to you all to be more beautiful, more necessary, and more applicable to human happiness than ever before. . . . Accepting him as my Redeemer, Savior, and Lord, I accept his gospel as the plan of salvation, as the one perfect way to human happiness and peace."<sup>1</sup>

President Joseph Fielding Smith, for whom President Benson had such great love, said as he concluded a conference:

"Now I pray that our Father in heaven will bless his people—bless them abundantly and in full measure.

"I pray that the Saints shall stand firm against the pressures and enticements of the world; that they shall put first in their lives the things of God's kingdom; that they shall be true to every trust and keep every covenant."<sup>2</sup>

President Harold B. Lee, boyhood friend and companion, and later esteemed associate of President Benson in the Lord's work, declared:

"I can't leave this conference without saying to you that I have a conviction that the Master hasn't been absent from us on these occasions. This is his church. . . . He isn't an absentee master; he is concerned about us. He wants us to follow where he leads."<sup>3</sup>

President Spencer W. Kimball, who was sustained as an Apostle and member of the Council of the Twelve at the same time as President Benson, closed a general conference by saying:

"As each one of these wonderful sermons has been rendered I've listened with [rapt] attention, and I have made up my mind that I shall go home

and be a [better] man than I have ever been before."<sup>4</sup>

President Benson, these have been declarations from four of your associates who have been an ongoing influence in your life. You, yourself, have said in a similar close of a conference:

"May we all go to our homes rededicated to the sacred mission of the Church as so beautifully set forth in these conference sessions—to 'invite all to come unto Christ' (D&C 20:59), 'yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him' (Moroni 10:32)."<sup>5</sup>

### At parting

My brothers and sisters, I know the love President Benson has for you, for the Lord, and for His work. He would urge us to keep the commandments, sanctify our homes, and perfect our lives. May we, in unity, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, achieve these three objectives. Doing so will bring joy to our souls, peace to our prophet's heart, and the smile of God's approval on our efforts.

Sing we now at parting  
One more strain of praise.  
To our Heavenly Father  
Sweetest songs we'll raise.  
For his loving kindness,  
For his tender care,  
Let our songs of gladness  
Fill this Sabbath air.<sup>6</sup>

The work is true. Jesus is the Christ. Ezra Taft Benson is a prophet of God. I so testify and pray that heaven's blessings may attend all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Oct. 1965, p. 144; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1965, p. 1160.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 162; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 110.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1972, p. 176; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, p. 134.

4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1977, p. 113; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, p. 75.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1988, p. 97; or *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 84.
6. *Hymns*, no. 156.

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The choir sang "God So Loved the World."

Elder Lynn A. Sorensen offered the benediction.

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## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, sang at the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe and Linda Margetts were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a family choir from the Jordan Utah South and Riverton Utah regions, conducted by Roger L. Sorenson. John Longhurst was the organist.

At the general priesthood session, a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Jerold Ottley and Robert C. Bowden conducted the

choir, and Richard L. Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and Richard L. Elliott were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard L. Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**

Clerk of the conference

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